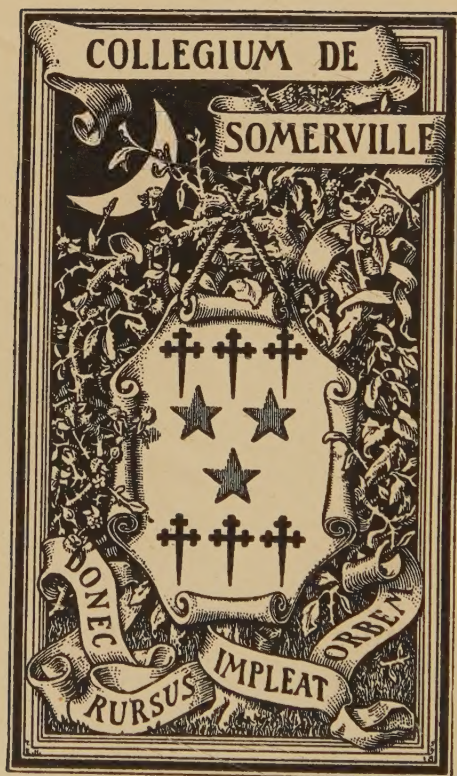






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Alinari.

*Ercole D'Este,
Second Duke of Ferrara.
By Dosso Dossi.*

Storia Ecclesiastica d'Italia.

DUKES & POETS IN FERRARA

A STUDY IN THE POETRY, RELIGION AND
POLITICS OF THE FIFTEENTH AND
EARLY SIXTEENTH CENTURIES

By

EDMUND G. GARDNER, M.A.

*Author of "Dante's Ten Heavens,"
"The Story of Florence," "Desiderio," etc.*

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BUTLER & TANNER,
THE SELWOOD PRINTING WORKS,
FROME, AND LONDON.

TO
PROFESSOR
JAMES SMITH REID
THIS BOOK IS
AFFECTIONATELY AND GRATEFULLY
DEDICATED

PREFACE

THIS present volume is the first instalment of a work upon which—though several times interrupted by the suggestions and calls of friends and publishers to deal with other subjects—I have now been engaged for some years.

It is, perhaps, only of late that the importance of Ferrara in the history of the Italian Renaissance, above all in that of the literature of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, has been fully realized, even in Italy. And it certainly needs no apology that a work, or a series of works, upon this theme should be addressed to English readers—citizens of that country which the first critical editor of Boiardo, Antonio Panizzi, may be said to have made his own. It was originally my intention to include in one volume the whole history of Ferrara, from the days of Leonello and Borso down to its devolution to the Holy See after the death of the second Alfonso; and, more particularly, to deal with it from the point of view of letters, to weave into the political history of the Ferrarese State the lives and work of those three great poets who have almost eclipsed the fame of the sovereigns of the House of Este whom they served. A modern Tuscan poet, Giovanni Marradi, sings thus in his *Notte a Ferrara* at the sight of the great Castello Vecchio:—

Chi parla, o gran mole, dell' odio che antico
Su te cumularono gli anni ?
Se canta d'intorno Messer Ludovico,
Chi pensa a' tuoi vecchi tiranni ?

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Chi pensa a' tiranni se vola il Boiardo
Nel cielo de' sogni stellato ?
Se squilla a battaglia, pensoso e gagliardo,
Il buon cavaliere Torquato ?

But the wealth of material at my disposal, published and unpublished, has proved far too great to be dealt with adequately in one volume, or indeed in a single work.

The two greatest personalities in the story of Ferrara are undoubtedly the second Duke, Ercole I d'Este, and the supreme poet after Dante of the Italian nation, Lodovico Ariosto. The former may be said to have created modern Ferrara, the latter raised it to a world-wide importance in the history of European literature. Ferrarese history falls naturally into two very clearly divided portions, the point of division being not the death of the great Duke Ercole and the accession of the formidable Alfonso I, but the close of the year 1508—the year that witnessed the conclusion of the League of Cambrai. After that year, Ferrarese art, literature and politics take a new turn. The works of Lodovico Ariosto soon after that date begin to be expressed in a different form, and seem impregnated with a new spirit. Between his earlier writings, in verse and prose, and his later poetry, is all the difference between the early and the full Renaissance; and in the carnival of the following year, 1509, with his second prose comedy, the *Suppositi*, he crowned and completed the work for the renovation of the Italian Drama, which his late sovereign Ercole had begun and promoted by his influence and patronage. We see a similar thing in Ferrarese painting. The earlier school still survived in the person of Lorenzo Costa, but Dosso Dossi and Benvenuto Tisi had hardly begun to make themselves known, and practically all their extant

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work, all at least that is really significant, was still to come. These first years of Alfonso's reign witnessed the dispersal, by death or otherwise, of the peculiar literary society that had gathered round his father and predecessor, and had given its tone to his Court.

In this present volume, then, I deal with the political and literary history of Ferrara from the epoch immediately preceding the times of Borso and Ercole down to the dispersal of what we may call the Herculean circle in the years 1508-1509; that is, with Leonello d'Este and Borso the first Duke, with the whole reign of Ercole I, with Savonarola and Boiardo and their contemporaries, and with the opening years of Alfonso's reign. I need hardly offer apology or explanation for lingering in some detail over Ercole's relations with Savonarola and other mystical spirits, men and women, of the same Dominican Order. As I read the character of this (to me at least) the most interesting figure among the sovereigns of the early Renaissance, a sincere but somewhat ineffectual mysticism is the leading motive in Ercole's life. There were many Italian princes of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries who, in their general foreign and domestic policy, followed a line of conduct analogous to his; there was not one, so far as my knowledge extends, who strove so diligently to establish relations with the unseen world.

Although the youth and early manhood of Ferrara's supreme poet fall under the epoch here considered, I have dealt with him merely cursorily. In a second volume, which is already well in hand, but which will be in the form of an entirely independent work, I treat in full of the Life and Work of Ariosto—the King of Court Poets, as I venture to call him. This will naturally include the adventurous and

PREFACE

romantic reign of Alfonso I. I also intend, in a smaller book, to deal separately with the painters of the Ferrarese School. I hope ultimately to complete the history of Ferrara with a volume dealing with Ercole II and Alfonso II ; the Protestant Duchess Renata ; Torquato Tasso ; the enforced surrender of the Duchy to Pope Clement VIII, and the expulsion of the last Duke, Cesare d' Este.

English readers are already familiar with the earlier portion of the reign of Ercole I, in so far as his children are concerned, in the charming pages of Mrs. Ady (Julia Cartwright). To her *Beatrice d' Este* I am happy to acknowledge myself indebted, and I have, as far as possible, avoided going over the same ground. I regret that, living for the present in Italy, I did not become acquainted with her more recent *Isabella d' Este* in time to consult it for the present volume, and do not, therefore, know whether she has been able to add anything to the rich store of materials already gathered by Professors Luzio and Renier.

Among modern Italian writers, I must in the first place specially acknowledge my debt to the late Antonio Cappelli, whose publications are of inestimable value to the student of Ferrarese history at every turn. The researches of Alessandro Luzio and Rodolfo Renier have thrown a flood of light upon the inner life of the Italian Renaissance, especially in all that concerns the Houses of Este and Gonzaga, and I trust that in my pages I have made full acknowledgment of what I have derived from their essays and studies, to which no student can be sufficiently grateful. I have made much use of the labours of that band of Italian scholars, led by Naborre Campanini, who raised so excellent a literary monument to Boiardo on the occasion of the fifth centenary of his birth ; of the various publications of Count Luigi

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Alberto Gandini, Angelo Solerti, Adolfo Venturi, and Umberto Dallari; of Dr. Ludwig Pastor's monumental history of the Popes. More recently still, the work of a younger Italian scholar, Giulio Bertoni, *La Biblioteca Estense e la Cultura Ferrarese ai tempi del Duca Ercole I*, has proved of very great service to me; not only for what it contains (though that is of much value), but also for its copious references and indications to manuscripts and other sources of information, it is hardly too much to say that Dr. Bertoni's book will prove an indispensable guide to all students who would obtain an independent knowledge of the literary atmosphere of fifteenth century Ferrara.

In leaving this, my first serious contribution to the study of Italian history, it is a pleasant duty to express again my gratitude to the noble books of Professor Villari on Savonarola and Machiavelli, from which so many of us have drawn our first knowledge of that fascinating, many-sided epoch in the world's civilization which is called the Renaissance in Italy.

Except where otherwise stated, my quotations are made directly from the documents in the Archives of Modena and the Vatican. At the risk of incurring the charge of being pedantic, I have indicated, somewhat scrupulously and precisely, when the documents are quoted from the published work of Italian scholars—especially as there seems a growing impression in Italy that of late a somewhat lax standard has sometimes been prevalent among us in England in this respect. I have gone on the principle of always translating Latin or Italian quotations when inserted in the text, but not necessarily when merely quoted in the notes. In an Appendix, I have made a small selection of the rich material in the way of un-

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published documents available, partly as specimens and partly for a fuller elucidation of the text ; as a rule, with two or three exceptions, I have not published the text of a document in the Appendix which has already been translated in the body of the work. I have modernized the punctuation and accentuation, and expanded the contractions, but otherwise (with the exception of the substitution of *v* for *u*) my transcripts are textual. It has not been a part of my plan to supply a full critical apparatus of documents, which would be out of place in a work intended for the general reader as well as for the professed student of the Renaissance.

My grateful thanks are due to the Cavaliere Giovanni Ognibene and the officials of the Archivio di Stato in Modena, for their ever-ready assistance and invariable courtesy shown me during my researches ; to the authorities at the Archivio Segreto of the Vatican ; and to Dr. Giulio Bertoni, for some valuable suggestions and for having called my attention to several documents of importance which would otherwise have escaped my notice.

E. G. G.

MODENA, *July 2*, 1903.

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B.

Croniche facte et scripte per me Ugo Caleffino notario Ferrarese, figlio del quondam Sr. Recordato cittadino di Ferrara, comenzando dal anno, mese e dì chel ill^{mo}. Sr. Messer Hercole mio Patrone e Signore entra Duca della Città de Ferrara (referred to in the text as Ugo Caleffini, *Croniche del Duca Ercole*). Copied by Giulio Mosti in February, 1581. British Museum. Additional MS. 22, 324.

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Chapter I

UNDER THE WHITE EAGLE OF ESTE

FERRARA has been styled the "first really modern city in Europe." To-day it lies magnificent in its desolation. Although the Ferrarese, throughout the struggles that have made Italy one, gave ample proof of their patriotism, the pulse of the new Italian nation beats but feebly in this city that was once among the most characteristic products of the Renaissance. Gabriele d'Annunzio has hymned its "deserta bellezza," and every sympathetic student of modern Italian letters must know the striking poem, *Alla Città di Ferrara*, that Carducci has written upon the contrast of its past glories with its present decay. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Ferrara was one of the most ardent centres of Italian life and culture, the seat of a refined and brilliant Court, for a while even the jealous rival of Florence, the capital of a potent State that ranked only below the five great powers of the peninsula, and that, in its epoch of greatest extension, stretched right across Italy almost from sea to sea.¹ Florence had given to all

¹ "Mira la nobil terra,
Quasi gran fascia che l'Italia fenda
E fra due mar si stenda."

Tasso, *Canzone nel viaggio de la illustrissima signora Duchessa di Ferrara per lo Stato* (in September, 1584).

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the world the supreme poet of the Middle Ages, Dante Alighieri, though she sent him forth to die in exile at Ravenna, with whom she must now share his fame. Although the sovereign singer of the Italian Renaissance, Lodovico Ariosto, was actually born at Reggio, yet Ferrara may, in part at least, justly claim him as her own, and has fairly earned the proud title that Carducci gives her—"Madre de l'itale muse seconda."

The chief glory of Ferrara is still the Castello Vecchio, the great palace castle of the princes of the House of Este. Hardly elsewhere in Italy, save at Urbino, shall we find so magnificent a monument of the very spirit of the age of the Italian Despots, in contrast with such democratic palaces of the Republics as the Palazzo della Signoria at Florence or the Palazzo Pubblico at Siena. Everywhere from the walls its four huge red towers are seen through bowers of green trees, bathed in the first fires of sunrise, transfigured in the glow of an Emilian sunset, or at night looming up dark and threatening against the stars. Wander where we may through the streets of Ferrara—and there are few cities more pleasant to linger in for weeks together, enjoying at every turn some relic of the golden past—we feel its pervading presence. And everywhere throughout the city we touch the memories of the illustrious House that reared the goodly fabric of an ideal Renaissance State, though more than three centuries have passed since the White Eagle of Este was hurled down from the battlements and the last Duke of Ferrara, with set features and eyes fixed upon a letter in his hand, drove out of the gate of his city. The one great poet of the Italian Renaissance having been born a Ferrarese subject, it was inevitable that he should be a Court poet.

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“The laudable discretion of the Marquis of Este,” wrote Dante, “and his munificence prepared for all, make him to be beloved.”¹ It is probable that these words were written in irony, for elsewhere the Divine Poet never touches, be it ever so lightly, any member of the great Guelf house that, save for two brief intervals, reigned in Ferrara from the beginning of the thirteenth to the end of the sixteenth century, without leaving a lasting scar of infamy upon the name. The fair-haired Obizzo II, fourth Estensian lord of Ferrara, who added Modena and Reggio to his dominions, is plunged with Ezzelino—that ghastliest of mediaeval tyrants, from whom Obizzo’s own grandfather, the magnanimous and heroic Azzo Novello, had delivered Italy—into the river of boiling blood, where the fierce Centaurs hunt the damned souls of tyrants and murderers; his pander, the Bolognese Venedico Caccianimici, cowers beneath the lash of the horned demons in the “Evil Pits” of the seducers of women; Obizzo’s son and successor, the Marchese Azzo VIII, is branded as a parricide, while one of his victims haunts the shores of the Mountain of Purgation amongst the other dim ghosts of those that fell by the sword.² It is more probable that Dante never lingered in Ferrara, and indeed, during the greater part of his wanderings, the princes of the House of Este—Rinaldo and Obizzo III and other nephews of Azzo—were themselves despoiled of their States and in exile, while the vicars of King Robert of Naples and the legates of the Popes of Avignon held their

¹ *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, ii. 6.

² *Inferno*, xii. 109–112, xviii. 55–57; *Purgatorio*, v. 77. For the subject of Dante’s treatment of the House of Este, see I. Del Lungo, *Dante ne’ Tempi di Dante*, pp. 379–434, and T. Sandonnini, *Dante e gli Estensi*, in the *Atti e Memorie delle RR. Deputazioni di Storia Patria per le Provincie Modenesi e Parmensi*, series iv. vol. 4.

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capital, and hanged or beheaded Ghibellines and Estensians alike.

Throughout Ferrarese history, we shall find two counter-acting forces playing upon Ferrara: Rome and Venice contending for predominance. Although the Popes recognized the Estensi as their vicars *in temporalibus*, they claimed Ferrara as part of the legacy of the Countess Matilda to the Holy See, and at a later epoch made prolonged efforts, crowned at last with success, to bring back the State to their direct dominion. The Republic of Venice, as early as the beginning of the twelfth century, had established a colony in the city for commercial purposes, with special treaty rights. It had joined with the Pope in overthrowing the last of the Salinguerra and restoring Azzo Novello to power in 1240, because these rights had not been respected by Salinguerra and his Ghibellines when they held the place in the name of the Emperor Frederick II. But now that the Venetians were beginning to turn their attention to making acquisitions on the Italian mainland, Ferrara appeared to them a tempting and possible prize.

Wearied out with fruitless efforts to recover by force of arms the cities of Modena and Reggio, which had revolted in 1306, the Marchese Azzo VIII died on the last day of January, 1308, in the castle of Este, whither he had gone for the sake of the baths of the Paduan district. He left no legitimate children. Before leaving Ferrara, in consequence of the feud between him and his brothers Aldobrandino and Francesco, he had made a will leaving the government to his infant grandchild Folco, the legitimate son of his bastard Fresco, and appointed the latter regent; but it was said that, in Este, he had been reconciled to his brothers, had revoked his will and appointed them his heirs.

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A disastrous contest for the possession of Ferrara followed, between Fresco on the one hand, who was in actual possession, and the Marchese Francesco, with his nephews Rinaldo and Obizzo, on the other. The Republic of Venice was ready to take a hand in the game; while Azzo lay on his death-bed, the Doge Gradenigo had sent three Venetian nobles to Ferrara, under the pretext of condoling with the Marquis in his illness and offering their assistance, if need should arise, to investigate the state of things and the disposition of the people, and, in case of his death, to take measures for "the good state of Ferrara," in accordance with Venetian interests.¹ Fresco appealed to Venice, and Venice supported his claim. But Pope Clement V, as suzerain, adopted the cause of the Marchese Francesco, with the real intention of reducing Ferrara to the direct domination of the Holy See. His Legate, the Cardinal Arnufio or Arnaldo Pelagrua, assembled a large army in Ravenna, under the orders of Lamberto da Polenta (the brother of Dante's Francesca), and was joined by the Marchese Francesco himself. On the arrival of the ecclesiastical army, by land and river, beneath the walls of Ferrara, Fresco fled into the fortress of Castel Tedaldo, which protected the city from the south, and then, finding himself unable to resist the superior forces of Francesco and the Legate, made over all Folco's claims on Ferrara to the Venetians, and surrendered the castle to their fleet which had swept up the Po. Seeing the standard of San Marco floating from the battlements of the Castello, the Ferrarese opened their gates to the papal troops—under the impression that they were about to welcome the Marchese Francesco as their rightful sovereign.

¹ Romanin, *Storia documentata di Venezia*, iii. p. 12.

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“The aforesaid Legate,” writes the Benedictine abbot, Fra Niccolò da Ferrara, “with all his army entered into Ferrara with the will of all the people, who all cried out with one voice: ‘*Viva il Marchese Francesco.*’ The latter, who was in everything strenuous and daring, here seemed somewhat timorous. And he began to say to the people: ‘O my dearest brothers, cry no more ‘*Viva il Marchese d’Este*’; but say, ‘*Viva la Santa Chiesa Romana!*’ And in such wise, against the will of the people and of all his friends, the said Marchese Francesco gave the lordship to the aforesaid Messere Arnufio, the Legate, and made him dismount in his own ancient palace, believing without doubt that, in return for so great courtesy and for so great humanity, that Legate would freely give back to him the said lordship, as he had promised. But he did not yet know well these ecclesiastical pastors; for the said Legate kept the lordship, and the Marchese Francesco remained deceived.”¹

A tremendous struggle by land and water followed, for the possession of Ferrara, between Venice and Avignon. The Venetians held the fortress, the papal forces the city, and great cruelties were perpetrated on either side; until, in the latter part of August, 1309, the Marchese Francesco gained a decisive victory on the Po over the Venetian fleet, while the ecclesiastical troops stormed the Castello, and put the whole Venetian garrison to the sword. Venice was forced to make peace in 1311, and recovered her trading rights and privileges; but practically nothing of their dominion was left to the Estensi.

The Pope made over Ferrara to the government of King Robert of Naples, whose vicars and chamberlains held it

¹ *Libro del Polistore*, col. 716.

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with Catalan and Gascon mercenaries in the name of the Church and King. The brutal murder of the Marchese Francesco by these Catalans in 1312, the cruel and treacherous execution of the Ferrarese refugees, whom the Bishop of Feltre had betrayed to the royal vicar in 1314 (the tragedy eternalized in certain grim lines of the *Divina Commedia*),¹ are typical of their rule. But in July, 1317, the Ferrarese rose in the mass and recalled the Estensi. The Catalan or Gascon garrison in Castel Tedaldo was slaughtered to a man. Excommunication and interdict followed as a matter of course, and a prolonged struggle with the Pope and his legates, especially the infamous Beltrando dal Poggetto, until the Estensi were formally reconciled to the Church, and in 1332 Pope John XXII finally invested the brothers Rinaldo, Obizzo III, and Niccolò I, with the Vicariate of Ferrara.

With the restoration of the House of Este, followed thus by the recognition of the princes as Vicars of the Church in Ferrara and the general reintegration of their dominions,² a

¹ *Paradiso*, ix. 52-60 ; cf. *Libro del Polistore*, col. 727.

² At this epoch the principal places in the Estensian lordship were Ferrara itself and the surrounding country, Argenta, Comacchio, Castel del Finale, Adria, Ariano, Rovigo, Lendinara, and all the Polesine di Rovigo. Modena was recovered in 1336. Este, that fascinating little town at the foot of the Euganean Hills, from which the Lords of Ferrara continued to take the title of Marquis, had been captured by the Paduans in 1213, when they forced the Marchese Azzo VII to become a Paduan citizen. In 1220 the Emperor Frederick II compelled the Paduans to restore it, and to rebuild the palace or castle (Document in Muratori, *Delle Antichità Estensi*, i. p. 415), but it was soon lost again, and, though frequently held out by the Dukes of Milan or the Popes as a bait to lure the Estensi into a war with Venice, it was never permanently recovered. It was burned down in 1317 by Can Grande della Scala, and the present castle is the remains of one that was built by Ubertino da Carrara. In 1331 the Pope compelled the Estensi to drop the title

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brighter epoch opens. Their discretion and munificence—to adopt in earnest what on Dante's lips had sounded as bitter sarcasm—induced Italians of every State to visit their Court, and even to become their subjects. Among the first to do this were the Ariosti from Bologna, who were destined to give Ferrara and the House of Este their greatest glory. A beautiful Bolognese woman, Lippa di Jacopo Ariosti, had become passionately attached to the Marchese Obizzo in his exile, and on his restoration to Ferrara she followed him and became his mistress. *La bella Lippa da Bologna*, as Messer Lodovico was to call her,¹ bore her princely lover a goodly series of sons, three of whom—Aldobrandino, Niccolò II and Alberto—ascended the throne of the Estensi as vicars of the Church in Ferrara and vicars of the Empire in Modena. Obizzo married her on her death-bed, and she was buried with great state as lawful Marchesana in the church of San Francesco, the Pantheon of the reigning House.² Lippa's two brothers Bonifazio and Francesco, and her cousin Niccolò Ariosti, followed her to Ferrara. The two former rose to high honours in the Court, and were among the principal advisers of Obizzo's successors; Niccolò Ariosti founded the third Ferrarese branch of his family, from which the great poet was to be born.

of Marquis of Ancona, which they had used since the beginning of the thirteenth century.

¹ *Orlando Furioso*, xiii. 73.

² "On the 27th day of November (1347) died the noble and magnificent lady, Madonna Lippa degli Ariosti of Bologna, wife of the magnificent and illustrious Lord of Ferrara, Marchese Obizzo, whom he espoused in the last infirmity of her death, with the knowledge and licence of the Holy Father, Messere Pope Clement VI. By the which magnificent lady the aforesaid Marchese Obizzo generated eleven children, to wit, seven male and four female. She was buried at the Place of the Friars Minor at Ferrara with most great and magnificent honour" (*Libro del Polistore*, col. 801).

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The first great representative of the New Learning to enter the gates of Ferrara was Francesco Petrarca himself, who found a cordial welcome at the Court of Niccolò II in 1370, and was intimate with his younger brother Ugo.¹ A few years later Benvenuto da Imola, Petrarca's friend and Boccaccio's pupil, made amends for Dante's bitter scorn of the House of Este by dedicating to this same Marquis that famous commentary which an English scholar has given to the public in our own days, and which is still perhaps the best, as it is certainly the most entertaining book ever written upon the *Divina Commedia*.² Afterwards, at the Marchese's request, Benvenuto composed for him his *Libellus Augustalis*, a summary of the lives of the Emperors from Julius to Wenceslaus. It was to gratify this same Marquis that Fra Niccolò, "Master of Sacred Theology and Abbot of Santa Maria da Gavello," wrote in the vernacular a species of universal history from the origin of the world down to the year 1367—the *Libro del Polistore*, already quoted.³ The successor of Niccolò II, the Marchese Alberto, summoned the learned Donato degli Albanzani of Prato-vecchio, who (like Benvenuto da Imola) had known Petrarca and Boccaccio, to undertake the education of his heir. A little later, there came from Florence a branch of the Strozzi, flying from popular violence and Medicean guile.

¹ *Epist. Rerum Senilium*, xi. 13 and xiii. 1.

² *Benvenuti de Rambaldis, Comentum super Dantis Aldigherii Comoediam*, edited by Lacaita and W. Warren Vernon. Florence, 1887.

³ The latter portions, dealing with the events of the Monk's own days, were published by Muratori, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, vol. xxiv. Alessandro Mortara (*Catalogo dei Manoscritti Italiani nella Biblioteca Bodleiana*, coll. 27, 28) has shown that Muratori and Tiraboschi are in error in ascribing this work to the Dominican, Fra Bartolommeo da Ferrara.

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Nanni Strozzi, gallant soldier and accomplished courtier—the son of that Carlo Strozzi who, as one of the leaders of the Parte Guelfa, had been expelled from Florence after the Tumult of the Ciompi—settled at Ferrara towards the close of the fourteenth century. He married the daughter of one of the noblest Ferrarese houses, Costanza de' Costabili, served the Estensi for thirty years, and died fighting under their banner in a war against Milan in 1427. We shall find the children and grandchildren of Nanni Strozzi playing no small part in the subsequent history of the Ferrarese Court.

And in the following century, as the Renaissance dawned, others came to make Ferrara a second home; from Padua, the Savonarola; from Sicily and Verona, the humanists Giovanni Aurispa and Guarino, “la diva Grecia rivelando.”¹

Besides the great House of Gonzaga of Mantua, to which they were bound by ties of common interest and frequent intermarriage, there gathered round the sovereigns of Este a group of lesser princes, also connected by numerous marriages with Ferrara and with petty Courts resembling theirs upon a smaller scale. Such were the Counts of Correggio, the Pico of Mirandola, the Pio of Carpi, and the Boiardi, citizens of Reggio, feudal lords first of Rubiera and then of Scandiano.

Thus was gradually constituted the peculiar society of the Court of Este, which during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries shone with such a blaze of artistic light that it still, to some extent, dazzles our moral eyesight, and which, if it can hardly be said to have inspired, is at least reflected in the work of the two great romantic poets and the one great epic poet of the Renaissance in Italy.

¹ Cf. Carducci, *Alla Città di Ferrara* (in *Rime e Ritmi*).

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But, before turning to these princes of the Quattrocento and Cinquecento, a few general remarks must be made upon the State and government of Ferrara.

There was a darker side to this cultured Court life of the Ferrarese capital. The beginning of each reign was marked by palace conspiracies and followed by sanguinary executions. The papal investiture of the vicariate of Ferrara frequently included several members of the family; brother succeeded brother, and bastardy was held no obstacle. There were nephews, therefore, sons born to brothers in lawful wedlock, who saw themselves supplanted by their uncles, and the palaces thronged with discontented bastards of Este, who saw in these young princes a chance of bettering their own position. Sometimes these legitimate scions of the House fled from Ferrara to other States, and attempted to maintain their claim with foreign aid. At other times the unfortunate nephew stood his ground, and was led into a conspiracy against his successful kinsman. In these cases no mercy was ever shown. When Alberto, legitimated son of Obizzo III and Lippa Ariosti, succeeded his elder brother Niccolò II in 1388, there was a nephew Obizzo—the lawful issue of another brother Aldobrandino by his wife, Beatrice da Camino. This prince, who had a large following in the city, took occasion of his uncle's absence from Ferrara shortly after his accession to plot against his life. On Alberto's return, the plot was discovered. Obizzo and his mother were beheaded at night in the dungeons of the newly erected Castello Vecchio, and then, with the most rigid regard for form and ceremony, solemnly buried with full honours in the church of the Friars Minor. Their confederates—including Giovanni d'Este, a bastard brother of Alberto's own, and his wife—were publicly

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tortured to death in the streets and squares of Ferrara, and a noble lady, Costanza dei Quintavalli, was burned alive.¹

“The feeling of the Ferrarese towards the ruling House,” writes Burckhardt, “was a strange compound of silent dread, of the truly Italian sense of well-calculated interest, and of the loyalty of the modern subject.” In theory the people, represented by the Judge of the Sages, confirmed each succession by solemnly consigning the sword and sceptre to the new Prince, and before the high altar of the Duomo received his solemn oath of maintaining justice; in reality the government was an absolute despotism, though usually of a benevolent type. There was less even of the appearance of communal liberty in Ferrara than in almost any other State of northern or central Italy. No popular councils appear even to have been summoned during the two centuries with which we are concerned. The administration of the city was in the hands of a small council, the College of the Twelve Sages, which was presided over by the Judge of the Sages, who was appointed by the sovereign and held office at his pleasure. The Sages held office for a year, and occasionally, in affairs of great importance, some six or more additional members, *aggiunti*, were added to their council—all nominated by the sovereign. A recent writer on Ferrara in the fifteenth century observes that this Council of the Sages in reality is nothing more than “a body of

¹ Details of these horrors in Frizzi, iii. p. 377. For similar atrocities, on a smaller scale, on the accession of Alberto's elder brother Aldobrandino in 1352, when Francesco di Bertoldo d'Este (grandson of the Marchese Francesco, whom the Catalans murdered in 1312) attempted to obtain the lordship, see *Libro del Polistore*, coll. 827, 828. This Francesco's son Azzo in his turn conspired against the son of Alberto, Niccolò III. Even more dramatic examples will be found at the beginning of the reigns of Ercole I and Alfonso I.

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magistrates of the Marquis, delegated to direct all the communal business at the expense of the Commune.”¹ The Judge and the Sages were paid at the expense of the Commune, and every decision of the College that did not please the Excellence of the Marquis or Duke was at once overruled. The direction of the financial administration of the State was entrusted to the *Fattori Generali*. These officials were usually Ferrarese nobles, chosen by the sovereign to hold office during his pleasure. They were two in number in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries (three later in the days of Alfonso II), one mainly to superintend the financial affairs of the capital, the other of the dependent cities and towns. These *fattori* appear usually to have appointed the minor officers and lesser functionaries. They not infrequently bought their posts, and in many cases were corrupt and extortionate in the extreme. It was the policy of the princes to throw all the blame and odium upon these officers; in 1385 there had been a popular rising in which Niccolò II and Alberto had been forced to surrender the most unpopular of their ministers, Tommaso da Tortona, to be torn to pieces by the infuriated crowd. It was after this event that the great Castle of San Michele, now known as the Castello Vecchio, was erected; though the Estensi continued to hold their Court in the Corte Vecchia, what is now the Palazzo del Municipio, which had been begun by Azzo Novello in 1242, after the great siege of Ferrara which had left his family firmly planted on the throne. Nevertheless, the financial system did not work worse than in the other cities of Italy; it was sufficiently good to allow, according to a recent writer, large sums to be gathered up in

¹ G. Secco Suardo, *Lo Studio di Ferrara a tutto il secolo xv.*, p. 150.

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the coffers of the State without putting too great a burden upon the resources of the citizens.¹

In spite of the series of horrible tragedies that stained the palaces of the ruling House, notwithstanding the secret and mysterious murders into which no court of justice dared to pry, there was no State in Italy where the sovereigns were more beloved or more loyally served by their subjects. In case of war, the Estensi could arm their people and trust in their loyalty no less than in the trained skill of their hired mercenaries. Though the Ferrarese hated one Judge of the Sages worse than the devil and cut more than one Fattore to pieces, they did not lay their extortions to the charge of the sovereign. In the last days of the Estensian rule, under the second Alfonso in 1578, the Venetian ambassador wrote that the lower classes, *la gente minuta*, seldom attempted to smuggle or evade the customs; "wherefore, since each pays what he should, the revenues are large, and they will become even greater by reason of the reclaiming of the country near the seashore."²

The sovereigns were loud in professions of solicitude for their subjects' welfare, were desirous for them to be richer than those of any other Italian State, encouraged trade and generously supported education. Like the Medici in Florence, it was the policy of the Lords of Ferrara to dazzle their subjects with pageantry, perhaps less from artistic motives than from a desire to impress upon them the splendour and the glory of their illustrious House.

In the other cities of his dominions, the sovereign took

¹ Pietro Sitta, *Saggio sulle istituzioni finanziarie del ducato estense nei secoli xv. e xvi.*, p. 97. This can only apply to certain epochs of singular prosperity in the State.

² Quoted by Sitta, *loc. cit.*

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cognizance of the most minute details of the conduct of his subjects; his representatives were obliged to furnish him with full reports, sometimes daily, of what went on. Mere peasants, as well as nobles, were forced to travel from the remoter districts of the Duchy to Ferrara, to answer the Prince in person, or to appeal to him from the decisions of his captains or commissaries.¹ The whole life and being of the State was made dependent upon the will and person of the sovereign.

Ostensibly, religion was practised to a high degree. Two princesses of the Estensi had been raised to the altars as saints, and their shrines were highly revered by the people.² One, indeed, was known to cry aloud from her tomb, when any special danger threatened the city or its rulers. The princes had been instrumental in the return of the Popes from Avignon, and in the building up of the fabric of the Temporal Power that had followed. They were professedly devoted to the service of their papal suzerains, and frequently received the gift of the Golden Rose in return. They were lavish in donations to the Church; new convents and monasteries arose on every side; the rites and ceremonies of Catholicism were a part of the functions of the State, and were carried out with the utmost pomp. The members of the ruling House followed the Blessed Sacrament

¹ This was more notably the case in the reigns of Ercole I and Alfonso I. Striking instances will be found in Boiardo's reports to the former as ducal captain in Reggio, and in Ariosto's letters, when governor of the Garfagnana, to the latter.

² The Beata Beatrice I, daughter of Azzo VI (the first Estensian ruler of Ferrara), and the Beata Beatrice II, a daughter of Azzo Novello. But the distinction of sanctity was claimed for many other princes and princesses more or less connected with the Estensi, of whom we may still see a later apotheosis in the curious church of Sant' Agostino at Modena.

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in procession through the city on the feast of the Corpus Domini, and blasphemy was a penal offence. A special chapel was reared to the Blessed Virgin in the court of the ducal palace, with a much venerated picture of her that worked countless miracles. The princes were as eager in hunting out nuns conspicuous for their piety to adorn the Ferrarese convents, as zealous in welcoming spiritual persons with a reputation for heroic sanctity, as they were in procuring men of fine stature and strength to serve as *balestrieri* or crossbowmen, or in obtaining rare birds or animals for their menagerie. At the same time two of them appear to have attempted to rival Solomon in the numbers of their concubines, and their illegitimate children still baffle the computation of historians. *Venere lasciva* was a recognized part of the Court expenses, and, until the death of Duke Borso in 1471, it was quite an exception for the reigning sovereign to have been born in wedlock.

From the beginning of their rule in Ferrara, a halo of poetry had shone round the Court of the Estensi. The troubadours of Provence, the singers in the *langue d'oc* of the thirteenth century, had found generous and congenial patrons and protectors in Azzo VI and Azzo Novello. Aimeric de Peguilhan had sung the praises of Beatrice and Giovanna, the daughter of the one and the first wife of the other; the beauty of Costanza d'Este—daughter of Azzo Novello and wife of that Umberto Aldobrandeschi with whom Dante held converse in the first terrace of the Mountain of Purgation—was raised to the skies by Ralmenz Bistors of Arles. An Italian trovatore, Ferrarino, had frequented the Court of Obizzo II and Azzo VIII, and compiled the famous anthology of Provençal song still

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preserved in the Biblioteca Estense at Modena.¹ But Ferrara produced no real poet in the fourteenth century, no lyricist of the *dolce stil nuovo*, no singer of the philosophy of love to match even the lesser lights among the Tuscans and the Bolognese. Antonio dei Beccari, the *quasi poeta* (as Franco Sacchetti calls him) of Ferrara in the Trecento, adored the memory of Dante and carried on a correspondence in sonnets with Petrarca, upon the false report of whose death he composed a well-known canzone; but he stands practically alone, and wisely claims only a very modest place for himself.² Half a century of humanism and classical culture—call it pedantry, if you will—was needed for the lyrics and the poetical romance of Boiardo, the latter itself but a prelude to the epics of Ariosto and Tasso.

¹ For the literature of this subject, the *Coltura Francese Estense*, which does not come within the scope of the present volume, see G. Bertoni, *La Biblioteca Estense e la Coltura Ferrarese*, etc., pp. 4, 81-84.

² At the end of the canzone *Io ho già letto il pianto de' Troiani*, Antonio describes himself as:

“Anton de i Beccar, quel da Ferrara,
che poco fa, ma volentieri impara.”

Petrarca (*Epist. Rev. Senilium*, iii. 7) speaks of him as “that friend of ours of no ignoble genius, but distracted in too many things,” and addressed two sonnets to him. He died in 1370. In the previous century an Anselmo da Ferrara, by whom is a sonnet in the *Rime scelte dei Poeti Ferraresi* (p. 1), had corresponded with Fra Guittone d'Arezzo.

Chapter II

PRINCES AND HUMANISTS

AT the beginning of the fifteenth century—while, at Florence, Lorenzo Ghiberti was casting his bronze doors for the Baptistery and Cosimo de' Medici was preparing to overthrow the Republic—Ferrara was ruled by the third Marchese Niccolò da Este, nominally as Vicar of the Church and feudatory of the Pope, practically as absolute sovereign. Niccolò was the twelfth Marquis of the House of Este who thus held the Ferrarese lordship. Like several of the most famous princes of his family, he was not born in wedlock, but was the legitimated son by Isotta Albaresani, a Ferrarese lady, of the Marchese Alberto—that devout and bloodstained Alberto whose somewhat mean statue in pilgrim's dress still frowns on the façade of the Duomo, holding the Golden Rose that had been bestowed upon him by Pope Boniface IX.¹ Succeeding his father in 1393, when a boy of ten years old, Niccolò had been subject to a council of regency until 1402, and in the meanwhile there had been

¹ The Bull of Boniface IX, confirming the concession of the vicariate of the city of Ferrara and its county and district to Alberto Marquis of Este and his sons *ad vitam*, under the annual tribute (*census*) of ten thousand golden florins, is dated May 24, 1390. Niccolò, *de soluto genitus et soluta*, is only to succeed in the event (*quod absit*) of Alberto dying without legitimate sons, and is legitimated (Theiner, *Codex Diplomaticus*, iii. pp. 16–21).

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a hard struggle to preserve the throne from the attacks of a kinsman, Azzo di Francesco d'Este, from the conspiracies hatched by the citizens themselves, and from the intrigues of his own ambitious and formidable father-in-law, Francesco Novello da Carrara, that last Lord of Padua whom the Venetian hangman strangled in 1406.

When at last the government was placed in his hands, Niccolò at the age of nineteen found himself lord of the city and territory of Ferrara, which he held from the Pope ; of the imperial fiefs of Rovigo and Modena, the former including Lendinara, Adria and all the Polesine ; of Comacchio, doomed to be the cause of long and frequent contentions in later years ; of Argenta, Lugo and Conselice in Romagna. Seven years later, in 1409, he slew Ottobuono Terzi, the upstart Ghibelline tyrant of Parma and Reggio, at a conference beneath the walls of Rubiera, and added these two cities to his dominions. Reggio, the *giocondo*, as Ariosto called it, remained henceforth one of the choicest jewels in the crown of the Estensi—to whom, indeed, it had already belonged, as we have seen, during the latter part of the thirteenth century. Parma, which had been held by them for a few years in the middle of the fourteenth century, and had been the cause of a war with Milan, Verona and Mantua,¹ was ceded to Milan in 1420. In 1423 Rubiera was obtained from the Boiardi in exchange for Scandiano, and in 1440 Bagnacavallo and Massalombarda were purchased from Pope Eugenius IV. Thus were the dominions of the illustrious House consolidated, and from the Castello Vecchio of Ferrara, which his father Alberto had built, and which was then at the northern extremity of the city with

¹ The war that bore literary fruit in Petrarca's sublime canzone, *Italia mia*.

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magnificent gardens stretching down to the banks of the Po, Niccolò d'Este ruled over a rich and noble State, and aspired, with a considerable measure of success, to hold the balance of power between the greater sovereigns and republics of Italy.

When once seated firmly upon the throne with his States consolidated, Niccolò was a prudent ruler, and, after the conclusion of a brief and unimportant war with Milan, which ended in 1428, and in which he had commanded the forces of the Italian League, Ferrara became the most peaceful city of Italy. He was frequently appealed to as arbitrator by other princes. At the beginning of 1424 the Florentines and Filippo Maria Visconti submitted their quarrels to him, and his instructions to his ministers for the reception of the ambassadors afford a curious picture of the homely methods of the day. On January 27, the Marquis writes to his *Fattori* from his villa at Quartisana: "On the third day of this next coming February, the Ambassadors of the Duke of Milan and those of the Florentines are to come to Ferrara, to negotiate the peace which we have in our hands. We are certain that they will not wish to stay in the same hostelry; and therefore we would have you send for Antonio Galgano, the host of the *Angel*, and for the other of the *Swan*, and arrange with them that they get ready those two or three rooms which you and they shall think necessary, or more, if they believe that more will be needed, in order that, when the said Ambassadors come, they may find in both those two hostelries the things in order, so that they may be comfortable and may have good and fine lodgings."¹

¹ Letter of January 27, 1424, published by L. A. Gandini, *Saggio degli usi e delle costumanze della Corte di Ferrara al tempo di Niccolò III*, p. 163.

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More frequently had Niccolò to interpose between Venice and Milan, between whom in these years there was "perpetual quarrels and immortal hatreds," and on these occasions his unimpeachable impartiality excited general approval. "Thence it came about," writes Enea Silvio Piccolomini, afterwards that noblest of pontiffs, Pius II, "that although all Lombardy was ablaze with wars, Ferrara alone and the adjacent parts of its dominion enjoyed peace. For to whoso willed a passage was granted, provided that he passed through without doing harm."¹ Practically all that the Ferrarese saw of the interminable petty wars of Italy was the coming and going of the ambassadors of the various Powers, who came to Ferrara to discuss or arrange the terms of peace.

The Marquis himself is described by Enea Silvio as "a fat man, jolly, given up to lust." His character is a curious blending of mediaeval ferocity with the first germs of Renaissance culture, of apparently perfectly genuine religious feeling with the most unbridled sensuality. Like other princes of his House, his great passions were for travelling, for pageantry and gorgeous display, and for women. In the last respect, his appetite was quite insatiable. Ugo Caleffini, in his rhymed chronicle of the House of Este, says that Niccolò had eight hundred mistresses, and would have made the number a thousand, had he not died so soon.² This is presumably a courtly exaggeration, intended to exalt the Estense to the level of Solomon; but Enea Silvio similarly writes that the Marquis kept whole troops of concubines, and was quite indiscriminate in his choice,

¹ *De Viris Illustribus*, p. 15.

² *Cronaca di Casa d'Este*, p. 286. "L'era tropo amoroso la persona polita!"

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“plebeians and countrywomen no less than nobles.”¹ He appears to have acknowledged between twenty and thirty illegitimate children.

In the spring of 1413 Niccolò undertook a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, which has been fully described for us by one of his company, a certain Luchino dal Campo, who acted as chancellor on the voyage, in a narrative which is one of the most vivid pictures extant of the delights and dangers of travelling in the early days of the fifteenth century.² The whole tour took exactly three months, the party starting from Ferrara on April 6, and reaching home again on July 6. They set out from Venice in a Venetian galley captained by Pietro Contarini, and, sailing or rowing as the wind was favourable or contrary, they passed down the Adriatic, and by the Ionian Islands and the islands of the Archipelago, visiting the antiquities of Pola and wondering at the stags of Cherso, delighting in the singing of the Greek monks at Corfu and in the supper given by the Venetian governor in his orange-garden; equally interested in seeing the place where Carlo Zeno defeated the Genoese and the site of the rape of Helen by Paris. They visited Rhodes, coasted Cyprus, and at last reached the coast of Syria about twenty miles from Jaffa on the morning of May 11. The Marquis passed himself off as Niccolò Contarini, brother of the captain of the galley, and their visit to the Holy City, which they reached on May 15 and left on May 19, gives occasion for a wonderfully convincing picture of the prepotency and extortion of the Turks, the devotion of the Franciscan

¹ *Historia Friderici III Imperatoris*, p. 95.

² *Viaggio a Gerusalemme di Niccolò da Este, descritto da Luchino dal Campo*, edited by G. Ghinassi for the R. Commissione pe' testi di lingua nelle provincie dell' Emilia. Turin, 1861.

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guardians of the Holy Places, the mixture of credulity and piety in the pilgrims, as they were shown the possible and impossible sites of the scenes of sacred history and mediaeval fiction. At Mass at the Holy Sepulchre, Niccolò dubbed Alberto della Sala, Feltrino Boiardo,¹ Pietro Rossi and two others of his retinue, knights (the first-named renouncing his previous knighthood in order that he might receive it again at the sacred spot), himself girding on the swords, and on Mount Cavalry he bound on their golden spurs, bidding them ever remember where they had received the order of knighthood. "After this the aforesaid lord, who, although he also was a knight, had never borne the spurs of gold, but had ever waited until he came on this most holy voyage, willed that in this place Messer Alberto della Sala should fasten the one spur to his left foot, as being the more honourable, saying that he would go to have the right spurred at San Jacopo of Galicia."

On their return voyage, they were sumptuously entertained by the King of Cyprus, when the Marquis exhibited his great strength in drawing a mighty bow that the King had given him past his ear, whereas ordinary men could barely draw it a span. At a solemn supper party in the house of a noble of Cyprus, peacocks were set upon the table, and upon these peacocks the newly made knights and others took vows. The Marquis himself swore to God, to the Madonna, to Saint George and to the peacock, that in the first place where he should find himself in the company of men-at-arms mounted, to the number of a hundred or more in the face of the enemy, his should be the first lance that should be broken against these enemies, and until this vow

¹ Whose grandson was to enshrine this pilgrimage in his *Orlando Innamorato*, II., xxv. 52.

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should be accomplished, he promised to fast every Friday. Messer Pietro Rossi vowed that he would never lie, unless it were for the State of his Lord, or to save his own life or that of any intimate friend of his, and for a remembrance of this vow he undertook always to say an Ave Maria when he saw a painted picture of Our Lady. One of the household of the Marquis, Spinello, swore to aid any distressed woman who should ask him, provided that she deserved the name of woman — *alcuna donna che meriti aver nome di donna*.¹

In the following year, apparently instead of the Compostela sanctuary, a similar pilgrimage was undertaken to the shrine of St. Anthony at Vienne, when the Marquis was attended by Feltrino Boiardo and a party of gentlemen picturesquely clad in bright green, and courteously received by the King of France at Paris. On their return, the whole party was seized by the Marchese Manfredo del Carretto di Cera, in Piedmont, who offered to sell them bodily to the Duke of Milan, who had not yet recovered Parma. The Count of Savoy promptly forced the robber noble to surrender his prey, and, in spite of Niccolò's generous intercession, he beheaded the chief criminal and razed his castle to the ground. These were by no means the only pilgrimages that Niccolò undertook—the Santa Casa of Loreto and the Annunziata of Florence likewise attracted his fitful and eccentric devotion.

But although he made these pious vows and listened gladly to the preaching of San Bernardino of Siena, he made no pretence of altering his life. His adulteries

¹ Cf. Dante, *Vita Nuova*, § 19, who will write his canzone "a donne in seconda persona ; e non ad ogni donna, ma solamente a coloro, che sono gentili, e non sono pur femmine."

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appear to have continued uninterruptedly until a few months before his death.

Niccolò's first marriage with the ill-favoured Gigliola da Carrara was childless and unhappy. She died in 1416. But during her life the Marquis had a goodly family of sons born to him from other women. By the beautiful Sienese lady Stella dell' Assassino, he had Ugo Aldobrandino (born in 1405), Leonello (born in 1407), and Borso (born in 1413). Meliaduse (born in 1406, the senior of Leonello by a year) was his child by Caterina degli Albaresani, the daughter of a Ferrarese physician; Alberto (born in 1415) and Gurone Maria were the fruit of his adultery with Cammilla dalla Tavola.¹

The three sons that Madonna Stella had borne the Marquis were treated by him as though they were his legitimate children, and were regarded by all the city in that light. The birth of Ugo Aldobrandino had been celebrated as that of an heir to the State. At his christening in the Duomo, the Cardinal Legate of Bologna (Baldassare Cossa, afterwards Pope John XXIII) and the Lords of Rimini and Mantua had stood sponsors by their procurators and ambassadors, together with Niccolò de' Boiardi, the Bishop of Modena, in the name of the community of his city. The Arts or Guilds of Ferrara had made a great holiday, with horse-races and a sumptuous tournament; the Bishop of Ferrara (Pietro de' Boiardi), with all the clergy, had gone in solemn procession.² The Magnifica

¹ Cammilla, sometimes erroneously called Filippa, is named in a brief of Pope Paul II, dated April 26, 1471, which grants various spiritual favours "Alberto Estensi et Camille genitrici sue" (*Archivio Vaticano*, xxxix. 12, f. 139).

² Jacopo de' Delaito, *Annales Estenses*, coll. 1035, 1036. The express statement of Jacopo (writing with authority as the chan-

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Madonna Stella herself was regarded as no mere light-of-love, but as one to be treated with all honour. Her palace is still pointed out in the Via della Tromba. It is highly probable that, on the death of the Marchesana Gigliola, Stella expected to succeed to her dignities. She was bitterly disillusioned. In April, 1418, Niccolò took another wife—that hapless heroine of romantic poetry, Madonna Parisina de' Malatesta, the daughter of Andrea de' Malatesta and Lucrezia degli Ordelaffi—and brought her in triumph from Ravenna to Ferrara. Stella's death, in the July of the following year, mercifully saved her from the sight of what followed.¹

cellor of the Marquis and before the catastrophe of 1425) is that Ugo Aldobrandino was "the natural son, the first begotten male, of the illustrious and magnificent Lord Niccolò, Marquis of Este, by the magnificent Lady Stella dell' Assassino." And similarly, Enea Silvio Piccolomini (*Historia Friderici*, p. 94). Writing under Borso, Ugo Caleffini—for obvious reasons—implies that the hapless prince was not the brother of his sovereign, but the son of Caterina Albaresani (*Cronaca di Casa d'Este*, p. 285). It is more difficult to comprehend why Bandello (*Novelle*, i. 37) makes Niccolò's granddaughter, Bianca di Sigismondo d'Este, insist that Ugo was the legitimate son of the Marquis by his first wife, Gigliola—unless it be merely to heighten the effect of the tragedy.

¹ She was buried in state in San Francesco (*Diario Ferrarese*, col. 184). "Quanto fo bella e bona!" writes Caleffini (*loc. cit.*), "de ogni virtù la portò corona." Similarly, Enea Silvio tells us that men said she was a virtuous and wise woman, who had been corrupted by force and by the promise of marriage (*Historia Friderici*, p. 95). In the Biblioteca Estense at Modena is still preserved a Latin poem in hexameters in honour of Stella, dedicated to Giovanni degli Assassini by Galeotto Marzio da Narni (*Cod. Lat.* 66). The Assassini were a branch of the Tolomei of Siena, who changed their name when they settled in Ferrara. As the said Galeotto Marzio has it:—

"Mutantes patriam, mutabunt nomina : dicent
Namque Assassinos Ptholemea stirpe creatos."

Several members of the family frequented the Ferrarese Court during the fifteenth century (cf. Bertoni, *op. cit.* pp. 14, 25, 55, 64).

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The Marchesana Parisina bore her husband one son, who lived only for a few weeks, and two twin daughters, Ginevra and Lucia. The documents still preserved in the Archivio di Stato at Modena show her to have been an ideal great lady of the Middle Ages.¹ We find her a diligent housewife, keeping strict account of the linen, taking care that the attendants of her stepsons are properly attired. She was exceedingly generous to the poor, bountiful to the churches and convents. To her *donzelle*, her maids-in-waiting, she was particularly kind and generous, finding them suitable husbands, providing each on her marriage with a dowry, with her *corredo* or trousseau, and with those richly decorated *cofani* or wedding-chests that formed such a feature in the bride's equipment in Italy and of which the panels are among the treasures of our museums and picture-galleries to-day. A certain Pellegrina, daughter of a trusted servant of the Marquis, one Giacomo Rubino known as Zoese, appears to have been specially favoured by her and treated with the utmost generosity on the occasion of her marriage at the beginning of 1423. Parisina was a lover of horses and had a notable stable; she sent them to race for the *palio* at Verona, Modena, Bologna, Milan, and Mantua; and especially in 1422 and 1423 her favourite jockey, Giovanni da Rimini, wearing her colours of red and white, carried off victory after victory.² Also she took pleasure in hunting and hawking. We find her

The Ferrarese chroniclers all call Stella's father Giovanni, but Count Emilio Tolomei, through Mr. Langton Douglas, informs me that, in the records of the Tolomei of Siena, his name is given as Antonio.

¹ See Gandini, *Saggio degli usi e delle costumanze*, pp. 152-157, and Angelo Solerti, *Ugo e Parisina; Storia e leggenda secondo nuovi documenti*.

² Cf. documents in Solerti, *op. cit.* i. pp. 614, 615.

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sending to foreign cities for choice perfumes, for rich embroideries and personal ornaments, for rare birds in cages. But of her moral qualities and mental endowments we know next to nothing. She loved music, especially the harp, upon which she had her little daughters taught to play. We read of Fra Maginaldo, her chaplain, buying a psalter for her, and of a *cartolaro* Bartolommeo selling her an office book of the Madonna covered with black velvet.¹ If she read at all in books of a lighter character, the literary fashion of her husband's Court would have led her to dwell upon the passion of Guenevere and Lancelot, the guilty loves of Tristram and Iseult.² And for her, like that other Romagnole spirit whom Dante met in the Hell of the Lovers, there came a day when she "read no more."

The Marquis brought up his younger sons with considerable rigidity and parsimony. Borso and Meliaduse, when studying at Bologna and Padua, were even kept short of clothes to wear. When the plague threatened Ferrara in the summer of 1424, their father sent Meliaduse to Modena and Borso to Argenta, with the strictest provisions about the number of servants and attendants that they might have about them, and with a rigid charge to the *camarlingo* of each town, in whose charge they were put, not to let them have friends to dine.³ But for Ugo there seems to have been no restriction of any kind, and the registers of the Court expenses in these very years show Niccolò and Parisina rivalling each other in caring for his wants and pleasures, in providing him with clothes and money, horses and hawks, even with a harp—the latter, of

¹ Gandini, *op. cit.* p. 152.

² Cf. Bertoni, *op. cit.* p. 19.

³ See documents quoted by Gandini, *op. cit.* pp. 158, 159.

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course, being Parisina's gift.¹ In these years Leonello was away from Ferrara, having been sent in 1422, under the care of Nanni Strozzi, to study the art of war at Perugia under the famous condottiere, Braccio da Montone.

All contemporary evidence concerning the tragedy that deprived the Marchese Niccolò of his wife and heir appears to have been destroyed, and it is not easy to distinguish between fact and fiction in the story that has been handed down to us. All that is certain is that in the course of some journey that they took together—possibly to Ravenna, the city of Francesca and Samaritana—Ugo became the lover of his stepmother. One of Parisina's maids, who had been beaten by her mistress, betrayed the secret to Giacomo Rubino—that very same whose daughter had been treated with such generosity and affection by the Marchesana—and Giacomo brought the Marquis to a place where, himself unseen, he was the witness of his own dishonour. His vengeance was prompt and terrible. On the night between May 20 and May 21, 1425, the guilty pair were arrested in the Corte Vecchia, and conveyed thence to the Castello. There are two horrible dungeons shown in the Castello, beneath the Tower of the Lions. One, a little higher than the other, has a direct communication with the outer air of the court, and at times admits a faint gleam of day. The other is on the level of the moat; its floor is usually covered with muddy water; it receives air and faint light through a long aperture with treble barriers of iron bars. The tradition has it that into these ghastly cells the delicately nurtured lady and her princely young paramour were thrown; but it has recently been pointed out that the only two records that can in any sense be regarded as

¹ Solerti, *op. cit.* ii. p. 65.

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contemporary both agree that the place of their imprisonment was the so-called *Torre Marchesana*, the tower in which at the present time the great clock is placed.¹ Either way, their imprisonment was brief. The Marquis refused to admit either wife or son to his presence again, and the intercession of his most trusted advisers, Ugucione de' Contrari and Alberto della Sala, proved unavailing. On the night of May 21, Ugo and Parisina died by the headsman's axe in the Torre Marchesana. Ugo perished first. Then Parisina was led to her death by that same Giacomo Rubino by whom she had been betrayed. Thinking that she was going to be thrown into an oubliette or *trabocchetto*, she kept asking if she had yet reached the place. She asked after her lover, and, hearing that he was already dead, exclaimed, "Then I no more wish to live." When she came to the block, she laid aside her ornaments, and with her own hands prepared her neck for the stroke. The same night their bodies were brought to San Francesco and quietly buried there. Aldobrandino Rangoni, who had been Ugo's friend and accomplice, suffered the same doom at Modena.²

All that night the unhappy father and husband paced up and down the halls and passages of his palace in desperate grief, now gnawing his sceptre with his teeth, now calling passionately upon the name of his dead son or crying out for his own death. It is stated by Ferrarese historians

¹ Solerti, *op. cit.* ii. pp. 75, 76. Cf. the *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 184. In Bandello's novella, Bianca d'Este represents Ugo as imprisoned in the Torre dei Leoni and Parisina in the other tower.

² Fra Paolo da Lignago, *Cronaca*, ff. 114, 115; Frizzi, iii. pp. 450-453. Matteo dei Grifoni, in his Chronicle of Bologna, states that two of Parisina's maidens were likewise beheaded (*Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, xviii. col. 230).

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and chroniclers that, on the following day, he sent a written report of the tragedy to all the Courts of Italy, and that on the receipt of the news the Doge of Venice put off a State tournament that was to have been held in the Piazza di San Marco. No trace of such a document has ever been found, either in the Archives of Modena or in those of Venice or any other of the States with which Niccolò was in close relations.¹ The Marquis is said, by one of those half-mad perversions of justice habitual to Italian despots of that age, to have ordered the execution of several noble Ferrarese ladies who were notoriously serving their husbands as Parisina had served him—"in order that his wife should not be the only one to suffer," as Fra Paolo has it. One, Laodamia de' Romei, the wife of one of the judges, "who was known to him," appears to have been publicly beheaded;² but, after her, the edict went no further.

After Parisina's death, Niccolò had many bastards, male and female. A daughter, Beatrice, who was for a while the Queen of Feasts in Ferrara, was born in 1427. A Ferrarese proverb said: "Whoso would see Paradise on earth, let him see Madonna Beatrice at a festa."³ After her father's death, she was married first to Count Niccolò da Correggio and afterwards to Tristano Sforza. She bore to the Lord of Correggio a son, also named Niccolò, born in 1450, whom we shall meet many times in the course of this history. Beatrice's mother was most probably a

¹ Solerti, *op. cit.* ii. p. 79; but I think that the passage from the *De Politia Litteraria* (ii. 13), to be quoted presently, proves that some such step was taken by the Marquis to justify his action.

² Fra Paolo, *Cronaca*, ff. 115, 115v.

³ Cf. Luzio and Renier, *Niccolò da Correggio*, i. p. 208. They point out, however, that the saying may possibly refer to Niccolò's granddaughter, Beatrice di Ercole d'Este.

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certain Anna de' Roberti, a lady of a noble Reggian family, who a little later made the Marquis the father of Rinaldo Maria.

At the beginning of 1431 Niccolò took a third wife—Madonna Ricciarda, the daughter of the Marchese Tommaso of Saluzzo—but with the stipulation that, even if he had sons by her, Leonello, who had been legitimated in 1429 by Pope Martin V and betrothed to the daughter of the Marchese Francesco Gonzaga of Mantua, should nevertheless be the successor. On October 24, 1431, Ricciarda gave birth to a boy, to whom the name Ercole was given, who was destined to be the hero of Ferrarese history; and in August, 1433, a second son, Sigismondo, was born. In the September of this latter year the Emperor Sigismund, fresh from his Roman coronation, came to Ferrara. He knighted Leonello and Borso, Ercole and Sigismondo, and held the latter at the baptismal font.

But even to Ricciarda, the young wife of his old age, the Marquis was unfaithful. In 1440, the year before his death, his last child, Bianca Maria,¹ was born, who in the days of Borso married the condottiere Galeotto Pico della Mirandola.

Notwithstanding his immoralities and cruelty, Niccolò during his long reign showed himself by no means an unenlightened ruler. "He was a prince," wrote Enea Silvio Piccolomini, "of all in our century the most fortunate, save that, in the past, he was forced to avenge the adultery

¹ Bianca Maria is described by Caleffini (*Croniche del Duca Ercole*, f. 24v) as the sister of Rinaldo, in which case she must have been the daughter of Anna de' Roberti. Another bastard of Niccolò's born in these last years of his life was the painter and medallist, Baldassare d'Este.

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of his wife both upon her and upon his most beloved son.”¹ He was possessed of some culture and favoured scholars; in his youth he had had as tutor Donato degli Albanzani of Pratovecchio, who translated some of the Latin works of Petrarca and Boccaccio into Italian for his pupil’s benefit. He chose men of light and learning for his chancellors. One of his first acts upon coming into power had been the reopening and reorganizing of the Studio, which had been founded by his father, Alberto, but during the regency had been closed for lack of funds.

A new epoch in Ferrarese history opens in 1429. Feeling vaguely the breath of the New Learning, and urged on by Leonello, Niccolò desired to find some learned master for this son of his, who had completely taken the place of his slaughtered brother, to train him up in letters as Braccio da Montone had done in arms. “At that time,” writes Lodovico Carbone, one of the learned Court poets of the next generation, “he was seeking a grammarian, rhetorician, poet, to whom he might commend both his son Leonello, whom he had destined as the successor to his sovereignty, and all the Ferrarese youth.”² At Leonello’s own suggestion, his choice fell upon Guarino Veronese, who had studied in Greece itself under John Chrysoloras, and already taught in the principal cities of Italy. For seven years Guarino undertook the education of Leonello, and, when that was completed, he accepted the chair of Eloquence and of Greek and Latin Letters at the Studio in 1436, an appointment which was renewed to him every five years during his life.

¹ *Opera* (*Europa*, cap. 52), p. 450. In the *Historia Friderici* (p. 95) he represents the Marquis as suffering great remorse.

² Rosmini, *Vita e disciplina di Guarino Veronese*, i. p. 103.

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Stimulated by Guarino's presence and his genial enthusiasm, Ferrara became one of the most cultured and learned cities of Italy. The Marquis himself gradually acquired a library which was, for the times, a not inconsiderable one. In an inventory in the year 1436 of the "Libri del nostro Signore," there are 279 manuscripts set down, which were stored in the Torre di Rigobello, the chief tower of the Corte Vecchia, where the House of Este kept its secret Archives.¹ Learned men and artists flocked to Ferrara, especially in Niccolò's later years, when Leonello was in the first flower of his manhood, and were always cordially welcomed; Vittore Pisanello painted the portraits of his children and cast the sovereign's own somewhat grim features in striking bronze medals; Michele Savonarola, at his invitation, came from Padua to be his Court physician and to hold a chair at the Studio.

¹ See Adriano Cappelli, *La Biblioteca Estense nella prima metà del secolo XV*, where the complete inventory is given, pp. 12-30. Nearly 200 of these were naturally Latin, including classical writers, theologians, and mediaeval authors. There were 58 French MSS., including a great number of romances, to 23 Italian. Among these latter the minor works of Boccaccio are particularly abundant, while there are only two Dante codices, catalogued as "Libro uno chiamato Danti" and "Libro uno chiamato el scripto sovra el purgatorio de Danti" respectively. There are two French translations of the Bible, a Greek MS. and a German MS.—both unnamed. One of the treasures, which is still preserved at Modena, is a Caesar, *Commentarii de Bello Gallico*, decorated with miniatures by Giovanni Falconi of Florence and with marginal annotations from the hand of Guarino himself. That mysterious Greek manuscript seems to have disappeared, but was perhaps a Strabo, as in May, 1470, Scipio Fortuna, one of the librarians, writing to Borso in answer to his demand for "il Strabone in greco," says that he has no Greek book in the Tower and never had, but suggests that another librarian, Marco di Galaotto, may possibly have it. (Document published by Bertoni, *op. cit.* p. 259.) The famous Torre [di Rigobello fell in 1553.

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"I verily declare," wrote that acute scholar and ardent hunter of codices, Giovanni Aurispa, who had preceded Guarino in the Court of the Estense as the *precettore* of Meliaduse, "that I love this Marquis of mine not otherwise than as a good son loves a sweet and gentle parent."¹ Nor was religion neglected. A genuine saint, Giovanni Tavelli da Tossignano, held for a while the bishopric in succession to Pietro de' Boiardi. Bernardino of Siena was heard gladly by the Court and people alike, and nowhere else, save in his own city, has he left so enduring a mark in the number of the sacred monograms that we still see in the streets of Ferrara to-day.

A gorgeous and many-coloured episode in Niccolò's long reign was the assembling of the abortive Council of Ferrara in 1438. The Holiness of Pope Eugenius, John Paleologus, Emperor of the East, the Patriarch Joseph of Constantinople, with the Latin cardinals and prelates, the Greek ecclesiastics, and representatives of the nobles of Italy, gathered together under the protection of the House of Este. Humanists swarmed, and lent their services as interpreters between East and West. Giovanni Aurispa obtained from the Holy Father the office of papal secretary, while Leon Battista Alberti mystified the Patriarch of Grado by writing the life of an imaginary child martyr whose self-abnegation and heroic constancy should bring the blush to the cheeks of these worldly prelates and fathers. Needless to say that the young princes were well to the fore. Leonello delighted the Pope's Holiness with a harangue in very choice Latin, while Borso already gave the first signs of that love for magnificent display which

¹ Letter of 1437, quoted in Sabbadini, *Biografia documentata di Giovanni Aurispa*, pp. 72-74.

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became his ruling passion in later life. The Marquis himself was present at a banquet given by Ugo Benzi of Siena, "who at that time was held the prince of physicians," professor of medicine at the Studio, to a number of learned Greeks and Latin humanists. When the banquet was over, the tables were removed, and a vigorous discussion was held concerning the chief points at issue between the rival schools of the Aristotelians and Platonists, Ugo saying that he would defend whichever part the Greeks thought fit to oppose. After several hours of ardent disputation, Ugo Benzi put to silence one after another of the Greeks. It was thus made manifest, writes Enea Silvio, that "the Latins, who long ago had overcome the Greeks in the arts of war and in the glory of arms, in our age excel them also in letters and in all branches of learning."¹

Three years later, on December 26, 1441, Niccolò died at Milan, where he had been attempting, as a generous friend to both parties, to establish peace between the Duchy and the Venetians, and to set in order the State of the last of the Visconti, Filippo Maria. In his will he named Leonello as his successor, and after Leonello's death, Borso, and only after Borso the two legitimate sons, Ercole and Sigismondo. His body was brought back to Ferrara, and buried on January 1, in Santa Maria degli Angeli; "and he was interred bare without any pomp, because he so commanded in his testament."²

Leonello d'Este was a scholar and a poet, "a true humanist upon the throne."³ His military training under Braccio

¹ *Opera* (*Europa*, cap. 52), pp. 450-451.

² *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 191.

³ A. Venturi, *L'Arte a Ferrara nel periodo di Borso d'Este*, p. 690.

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da Montone had not made a soldier of him, and he only found his real self on his return to Ferrara, being now—after the tragical death of Ugo Aldobrandino—the recognized heir to the sovereignty, when he plunged into the rapidly advancing waves of the Classical Revival. To him and to his influence was due, almost entirely, the change from mediaeval ferocity to at least the outward semblance of culture and refinement that marks the latter part of his father's reign.

Before the advent of Guarino to Ferrara, Leonello had acquired considerable culture and was already in correspondence with him. It was, indeed, an event of no small importance in the literary world that first drew the prince and the scholar together. In 1428 Nicholas of Trier, one of the papal collectors of tithes in Germany, discovered in a German convent a codex of Plautus, containing sixteen comedies, twelve of which had until then been supposed lost. The codex was purchased by the Cardinal Giordano Orsini, who, under the impression that he would thereby render his prize more precious, stubbornly refused to let either Poggio Bracciolini or Guarino himself have a copy of it, in spite of the latter's assurance that, if his request is granted, "while the Comedies are called *Plautine* from their author, they will be named *Ursine* from their restorer."¹

When Guarino found himself installed in Ferrara as Leonello's master, he appealed to him, and the young Marquis promptly wrote to the Cardinal, to request the loan of the codex for his own use. His most reverend and illustrious Lordship deemed it not politic to refuse,

¹ Letter from Guarino to Giordano Orsini, in Pez and Hueber, *Thesaurus Anecdotorum Novissimus*, Tom. vi., pars iii. p. 165.

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and Leonello wrote exultantly to Guarino (who was temporarily absent from the city) to tell him that the prize was in his possession. For the gift of such "immortal things," Guarino wrote his pupil a letter of enthusiastic gratitude. "Greater thanks in days to come shall students and the whole order of lettered men pay thee. For all shall know that, by thy work and intervention, Plautus has been recalled from darkness to light, from the caverns to the schools, from death to life." Henceforth, Leonello and Guarino were united by bonds of the warmest affection. When the former was away from the city in his country villa, resting from his studies and engaged in hunting, he every day sent the humanist presents of game in proof of his prowess, accompanied by elegant and spirited Latin letters, "sweeter than honey," describing his sport; the presents Guarino received with delight, as marks of his princely pupil's continual recollection of him, the letters he answered back in kind, with lavish praise and genuine admiration.¹ For him, Leonello is his "King and Lord," the "Flower of Princes."

A vivid picture of Leonello and his circle, in the latter years of the reign of the Marchese Niccolò, is given us by the Milanese humanist, Angelo Camillo Decembrio, in his curious and little-known book, *De Politia Litteraria*,² which he undertook with the intention of dedicating it to Leonello himself, and, after the latter's untimely death, inscribed

¹ Thirteen letters from Guarino to Leonello (including the one quoted on the Plautine comedies) in Pez and Hueber, *op. cit.* pp. 154-164. Cf. Rosmini, *op. cit.* i. pp. 62-69, and Voigt, i. pp. 561, 562.

² *Politiæ Litterariæ Angeli Decembrii Mediolanensis, Oratoris Clarissimi, ad summum Pontificem Pium II, libri septem.* I quote from the Augsburg edition of 1540. Neither the British Museum nor the Biblioteca Angelica possesses a copy of the first edition printed at Basle in 1527.

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to Pope Pius II instead. Angelo, who represents himself as having been present at the scenes described and listening to the discussions which he professes to report, shows us the young prince surrounded by the elect spirits of the literary society of Ferrara, gracious and genial, treating them all as friends and equals and treated by them in the same manner. In every word and action there was a certain studied refinement, revealing a thoroughly harmonious character attuned to all that was seemly and beautiful. Something of this was traced even in his dress, the fashion and colours of which were carefully sought out so as to bear some mystical correspondence with the course of the planets and the order of the days of the week. The disputations which Angelo records are practically informal lectures by Leonello or Guarino—on the formation of a library, on the great classical writers, especially the Latins, Virgil above all, and on kindred topics. Leonello is the life of the whole, and, in his absence, the discourses that Guarino delivers on Greek derivations and the like are dull in the extreme. The other interlocutors merely put in a remark at intervals, throw out an objection, or by some timely question open a new subject. Among the older men we see Feltrino Boiardo, the Lord of Scandiano, whom we have already met; Uguccone de' Contrari, still the old Marchese's most trusted adviser; Alberto Costabili, and Giovanni Gualengo. The younger men are the prince Alberto Pio da Carpi, to be more famous in a later inheritor of his name, Carlo Nuvolone, and the two sons of Nanni Strozzi, Niccolò and Tito Vespasiano. The last named, then a mere boy (he was born in 1422), was already showing himself the most apt of all Guarino's pupils; according to his son, he had digested, not merely read, at the age of thirteen, all the

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chief Latin and Greek poets ; even at this early age, his Latin lyrics were the pride and delight of Leonello's circle—as they were destined to be for the more modern associates of his two successors.

We see, then, in Angelo's pages this courtly and scholarly group, now walking together in the cool evening to Belfiore, discussing as they go, now sitting under a great laurel tree in the garden, now meeting in the Corte Vecchia in Leonello's own private apartment, which was decorated with portraits of the great heroes of antiquity, now riding under the stars on a hot summer's night "to that castle or royal palace, of all in Italy the fairest, in popular speech called Belriguardo."¹ A little volume of Sallust in Leonello's hand, or a picture on the wall of a palace chamber, is enough to start a discussion on Roman history or Rome's historians, but more frequently Virgil or Terence will form the theme. Nor are the theologians denied a place in Leonello's ideal library. And though the vernacular writers are dismissed as "those books which sometimes on winter nights we explain before our wives and children," a sonnet of Petrarca's (the well-known *Cesare poi che'l traditor d'Egitto*) is thought worthy of more serious discussion.² On one occasion the whole party sets out by ship for Venice, in attendance upon Leonello, who "in the heyday of his youth, conspicuous in his golden neck-chain and gold-worked cloak," is going in the stead of his father to arrange a peace between the Most Serene Republic and Duke Filippo Maria of Milan. Arrived at the City of the Lagoons,

¹ This palace of Belriguardo was about seven kilometers from Ferrara, near Voghera ; the other, Belfiore, was then outside the walls, near the place where the Certosa still stands. Not a trace of either of these buildings remains to-day.

² *De Politia Litteraria*, i. 6, ii. 15.





Leonello d'Este.

By Giovanni Oriolo

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Leonello discourses upon Homer and Virgil with the young Venetian patricians who have come to meet him, until it is time to enter "the sublime palace of your Senate."¹ On another occasion, after hearing Mass on the feast day of St. John the Baptist at Ferrara, Leonello and his following accept the invitation of Giovanni Gualengo to taste the first ripe figs of his garden, after which they go up into his library, which he has all decorated with white and purple flowers, "diffusing grace and love with wondrous fragrance."²

Once, indeed, a strangely dramatic note is struck in their discussion. Leonello, with (to our modern notions) a curious lack of sensibility, defends the famous passage in the second book of the *Aeneid* where Aeneas threatens the life of Helen, by the example of the vengeance his own father had taken upon his brother and stepmother, but a few years before. "You have seen," Angelo represents him as saying, "my own father, a more recent and familiar example in this matter (concerning whom I speak not because he is my father, but as fame bears testimony), among the Italian princes by far the most famous for his observances of humanity, justice, and piety, when he saw what he would fain have not seen, put to death his wife, together with his son, the stepmother with the stepson. Was my father then condemned on account of this sort of vengeance, after the accusation was made public? By no means, but by the general opinion of all the fault remained upon the slain."³

¹ *De Politia Litteraria*, i. 11.

² *Ibid.* ii. 21.

³ *De Politia Litteraria*, ii. 13. Very different was the judgment of the Pope to whom the book is dedicated. "He was held," writes Enea Silvio, "both by others and himself to have been cruel to his

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Although united by ties of tenderest affection to his own brother Borso, whose prompt action had secured the loyalty of Modena and Reggio at the outset of his reign, and who practically shared the government of the Estensian dominions with him, Leonello found a more sympathetic companion in his special tastes and pursuits in the person of his elder half-brother, the bastard Meliaduse, who, after the death of Ugo Aldobrandino, had been forced to enter the Church by their father (a fate he had tried to shun by flight), but who seems to have shown no signs of envy towards his more favoured juniors. Meliaduse shared Leonello's friendship with humanists and artists, with Aurispa and Guarino, Leon Battista Alberti and Pisanello; and there are several letters extant, written in Latin from Leonello in Ferrara to Meliaduse in Rome during their father's lifetime, which give a pleasant idea of the characters and mutual relations of these two young princely scholars.¹ These Latin epistles, which Leonello addressed to the most distinguished humanists of Italy, do not strike us to-day as anything very remarkable; but they were greatly admired by his contemporaries. Guarino, in the funeral oration that he pronounced over his noble pupil's bier, cites them as extant monuments of his supereminent erudition, written in such faultless and choice Latin "that he approached very near to the diction of the ancients," and Enea Silvio Piccolomini, going a little further, declared that they were

son and unjust to his wife, from whom he wished to exact more than he gave. But this was the reward of his promiscuous lusts: neither he kept faith to his wife, nor his wife to him. The weaker paid the penalty; the potent sinner, whom the world dared not judge, was reserved for the judgment of God." (*Historia Friderici Imperatoris*, p. 95.)

¹ See R. Sabbadini, *Biografia documentata di Giovanni Aurispa*, pp. 58-61, and Mancini, *Vita di Leon Battista Alberti*.

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equal to the letters of Cicero.¹ Leonello was a most ardent collector of codices of the classical authors as well as of the early Fathers, and is said to have been the first to demonstrate the apocryphal character of the supposed correspondence between St. Paul and Seneca.² He was emulous, his Franciscan admirer Fra Giovanni da Ferrara tells us, of the fame and glory of those ancient heroes who shone alike by the splendour of letters and of great deeds.³ He is reported to have composed a Latin commentary upon his own actions—a species of autobiography of which no fragments are now extant. His one great hero was Julius Caesar himself, to whose name and honour he dedicated a special room in the palace. At his instigation Guarino translated the *Commentarii de Bello Gallico*, and dedicated to him a treatise against Poggio, who had exalted Scipio over Caesar among the captains of antiquity. On the occasion of Leonello's marriage with Margherita Gonzaga, Pisanello presented him with a portrait of his hero, *Divi Julii Caesaris effigies* (whether picture or medal does not appear), and Leonello was so delighted with the gift that he gave two golden ducats to the man who brought it.⁴

The diploma which the Marquis issued in 1450, shortly before his own death, in favour of Michele Savonarola—

¹ Rosmini, *op. cit.* i. p. 107 ; *Aeneae Sylvii Pii Pont. Epist.* 105 (*Opera*, p. 602). For more extravagant praise, see the passages from Poggio and Filelfo quoted by Voigt, i. p. 560. See also the poem addressed to him by the Neapolitan humanist, Porcellio, beginning, "Accipe Pieridum, Princeps Leonelle, mearum Munera" (*Carmina Illustrium Poetarum Italarum*, vii. p. 515).

² Cf. *De Politia Litteraria*, i. 10.

³ Johannes Ferrariensis, *Annales*, col. 453.

⁴ See Vasari, *Vita del Pisanello*, ed. Venturi, pp. 38, 39. A letter from Guarino to Leonello, encouraging him to defend the glories of Caesar, is in Pez and Hueber, *op. cit.* pp. 156-158.

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increasing his salary and freeing him from all other offices save that of curing "our body, that of the illustrious Lord Borso our brother, and those of others of our House of Este of either sex"—is a curious specimen of his humanistic style. It opens with a pompous citing of precedents of "those most excellent kings and princes of old time" who loved to have famous and learned men of this kind about them. Alexander the Great had Aristotle the philosopher as a teacher, Philip the physician as a familiar friend; Paulus Emilius had the astrologer Gallus, the elder Dionysius the philosopher Archytas, Augustus Caesar had Artorius a physician, and King Hiero of Sicily had the geometrician Archymedes. It was in imitation of these illustrious personages that "the illustrious and lofty Lord, our father of happy and revered memory," had put himself into the charge of Michele Savonarola, and, dying, had left him, together with all his State, to his son and heir.¹

Although his chief delight was in the writers of antiquity and the early theologians (St. Jerome being his special favourite among these latter), Leonello did not scorn or wholly neglect the vernacular. His easy dismissal of such writers as Dante, Petrarca and Boccaccio as books to be discussed with women and children on a winter's evening—which Angelo Camillo Decembrio ascribes to him, as we have seen—may be taken as a literary pose of his youth, when fresh to the humanistic learning that he was drinking in from Guarino. And, even then, his chief objection to the vernacular authors of his own day, especially the translators, is not that they write in Italian, but that they write bad Italian; his ideal, even then, is that the vernacular should be treated as a learned language, and written with

¹ Villari, *Storia di Girolamo Savonarola*, i. Document i.

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a care and erudition differing only in degree from that of Latin.¹ Later on, he took a wider and more modern view, and encouraged Leon Battista Alberti to write in Italian. He himself composed a little book of sonnets in that tongue ; two of them have been preserved ; they are amorous in subject, dignified and scholarly in diction ; and one at least is by no means devoid of poetical merit :—

Batte il Cavallo su la balza alpina,
 E scaturir fa d'Helicon fonte,
 Dove chi le man bagna, e chi la fronte,
 Secondo che più honore o Amor lo inchina.
 Anch' io m'accosto spesso alla divina
 Acqua prodigiosa de quel monte :
 Amor ne ride, che'l sta lì con pronte
 Le sue sagitte in forma pellegrina ;
 E mentre il labbro a ber se avanza e stende ;
 Ello con il venen della puntura
 Macola l'onda e venenosa rende ;
 Sì che quell' acqua, che de sua natura
 Renfrescar me dovrebbe, più m'accende,
 E più che bagno, più cresce l'arsura.²

¹ *De Politia Litteraria*, i. 6. Apparently Leonello held Dante in higher esteem than did the rest of his circle. When he has left them, young Tito Strozzi plucks Guarino by the sleeve, and, in a low voice, declares that he does not think that Dante is in the least comparable with Virgil. Guarino will not even admit that Dante understood Virgil rightly or imitated him well ; for him, the *Divina Commedia* is simply a "curious work," made up of classical imitations and liftings from the theologians (*ibid.* v. 64).

² "The Horse strikes the mountain rock, and makes the fountain spring from Helicon, where one bathes his hands and another his brow, according as Honour or Love inclines him more.

"I, too, often approach the divine and wondrous water of that mountain ; thereat laughs Love, who lurks there in pilgrim wise, with ready darts ;

"And whilst I advance and stretch out my lips to drink, he with the venom of the point stains the stream and makes it poisonous ;

"So that that water, which of its nature should refresh me, inflames me more, and the more I bathe, the more the burning grows."

Leonello's two sonnets will be found in the *Rime scelte dei Poeti Ferraresi*, p. 21.

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Leonello delighted in music and in the services of the Church. In his palace he built a beautiful chapel, sumptuously furnished and decorated, and had a special choir of singers brought from France to serve it.¹ Although he reared few new buildings in Ferrara, he was an acute and discriminating judge of the plastic arts. The Spedale di Santa Anna (founded originally by the good bishop, Giovanni da Tossignano, who died in 1446), and the Palazzo Trotti in the Borgo Nuovo (now much modified as the Seminario Arcivescovile and famous for Garofolo's frescoes), are the only buildings of importance that he erected. He kept his precious manuscripts, as well as his art collections, in Belfiore—one of those famous *delizie* or pleasure-palaces in which the House of Este excelled, and which, with the solitary exception of Schifanoia, have all disappeared—which had been left to him unfinished and which he completed. Before and after his accession, his favourite painter was Vittore Pisanello. "Pisano, the most excellent of all the painters of this age, when he came from Rome to Ferrara, promised me of his own accord a certain picture painted by his own hand, in which was the image of the Blessed Virgin"—thus he writes to Meliaduse in 1432, nine years before his accession. "I marvellously long to see that picture, not only because of the excellent genius of the painter, but also because of my special devotion to the Virgin."² The picture is now in the National Gallery of London. Pisanello cast many medals with Leonello's features, and painted his portrait at least twice, a splendid

¹ Johannes Ferrariensis, col. 456. Cf. Ugo Caleffini in the rhymed Chronicle (pp. 288, 289): "Quanto li piaceva li vespri con le messe!"

² See the letter in Sabbadini, *op. cit.* pp. 58-60.

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example being in the Morelli collection at Bergamo.¹ Flavio Biondo could congratulate the Marquis in 1446 that his coinage was modelled upon the style of that of the Roman Emperors.² When Ciriaco of Ancona, the great antiquarian traveller of that age, visited him in the summer of 1449, Leonello showed him with special pride among his pictures one by Roger Van der Weyden ("Rugierus Brugiensis") representing our first Parents and the Deposition from the Cross, which seemed to the humanist "painted by divine rather than by human art," and in the palace of Belfiore a painting of the Muses, by Angelo da Siena, adorned with a Latin epigram apparently by Guarino.³

The friendship between Leon Battista Alberti and Leonello seems to have begun in 1436, when Alberti dedicated his comedy *Filodossio* (*Fabula Philodoxeos*) to him, as the brother of his very dear friend, Meliaduse.⁴ The occasion

¹ Shortly before Niccolò's death Jacopo Bellini and Pisanello painted rival portraits of Leonello, and the old Marquis gave the preference to the Venetian (see the sonnet by the poet Ulisse, in Venturi's edition of Vasari's *Vita del Pisanello*, p. 46). In the Louvre there is a drawing of Borso by Pisanello and also a highly finished portrait of a young lady whom Gruyer (ii. p. 29) took for Margherita Gonzaga, but whom Venturi (*loc. cit.* p. 69) is probably right in recognizing as one of the Estensian princesses, Leonello's half-sisters. Chronological considerations make it probable that she is either Isotta, who in 1444 married the Count Oddantonio of Urbino and in 1446 Stefano Frangipani, or Beatrice, who married Niccolò da Correggio in 1448.

² Voigt, i. p. 562.

³ Francesco Scalamonti, *Vita di Ciriaco Anconitano*, pp. 143-145, in G. Colucci, *Delle Antichità Picene*, Tom. xv. (Fermo, 1792). Roger Van der Weyden's painting has been, rather questionably, identified with a picture now in the Uffizi. Angelo da Siena worked for both Leonello and Borso, but no Siennese influences can be traced in the Ferrarese school.

⁴ *Opere volgari di Leon Batt. Alberti*, ed. A. Bonucci, vol. i. pp. cxx., cxxi.

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of the Council of Ferrara brought the architect and the prince together, and cemented their friendship. Alberti returned to Ferrara in 1442, and was most cordially received by the Marquis. "When I came to visit thee," he writes, "the readiness and kindness of my reception at thy hands showed clearly that Battista Alberti was right well welcome to thee."¹ Alberti hesitated at first about sending his works in the vernacular, written "in such wise that I might be understood by my not very learned fellow-citizens," to Leonello. "I feared that they had not as much dignity as was needed to be read by a prince of such learning as thyself." But the Marquis reassured him, and the Florentine was delighted to have such eminent support in his appeal to the vernacular. "Right glad was I, not only to do a thing to please thee, but also to find that thou, a man most erudite, did not find fault with me for that for which many blame me, who say that I have offended the dignity of literature in not writing so eloquent a matter in the Latin language."²

Here we see Leonello a worthy precursor of Lorenzo de' Medici; but M. Gustave Gruyer notes that it was somewhat unfortunate for Ferrara that, less wise in this respect than his Mantuan brother-in-law, he encouraged Alberti as a man of letters rather than as architect. Leonello took the utmost delight in all that he wrote, whether in Latin or in Italian, and kept urging him to do more. It was at his instigation that Alberti's chief literary work, the three "Books on Architecture," *De Re Aedificatoria*, was written,³ as Alberti himself tells Meliaduse in his *Ludi Matematici*.

¹ Dedication of the *Teogenio*, *ibid.* vol. iii. p. 159.

² *Ibid.* p. 160.

³ *Ibid.* vol. iv. p. 424. For the relations of Alberti with Leonello, cf. especially Mancini, *Vita di L. B. Alberti*, pp. 188-197.

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In 1444 he was invited to decide upon the merits of two rival models for the equestrian statue of Niccolò III, to be erected in front of the Corte Vecchia, the present Palazzo del Municipio (the pedestal, alas, alone remains to-day). This suggested to him his curious little treatise in Latin, *De Equo Animante*, dedicated "to Leonello, Prince of Ferrara, and delight of the human race."

"When I came to Ferrara," he says, "for the sake of seeing and saluting thee, most illustrious Prince, it is not easy to tell the great delight that detained me there, seeing thy most beautiful city, thy right modest citizens and so accomplished and kindly a Prince as thyself. Verily, I understood how important it is to spend life in a republic in which one obeys, in leisure and tranquillity of soul, an excellent father of his country and one most observant of the laws and customs. It added to this pleasure that there I met with a most pleasant and excellent occasion to exercise my intellect, as I am wont to do; which, indeed, I took most gladly for both our sakes. For since thy citizens had decreed to set up in the Forum, with magnificent outlay, an equestrian statue of thy father, and excellent artists were contending together in the matter, they chose me, who take delight not a little in painting and modelling, as arbiter and judge. Wherefore as I again and again looked upon those works, made with admirable workmanship, it came into my mind to consider more diligently, not merely the beauty and the outward appearance of horses, but also their entire nature and habits."¹

One of Leonello's first cares was for the Studio of Ferrara, which during the latter part of his father's reign, in spite of the presence of Guarino, had lost ground consider-

¹ *Leonis Baptistae Alberti, Opera inedita, etc.*, pp. 238-239.

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ably. In this his object was not merely "to put to flight the clouds of ignorance and to infuse the light of Wisdom into the minds of his citizens," as the Franciscan Fra Giovanni has it, but also to promote the material well-being of the city by preventing promising young men from migrating elsewhere, and by attracting wealthy and learned foreigners from other States. At the instance of the special board of magistrates who were appointed to preside over the affairs of the Studio, and aided by the counsels of Guarino, he thoroughly reformed it in the years 1442 and 1443. All incompetent teachers were banished from the city, and the Marquis sent to every part of Italy for distinguished professors and lecturers in all branches of knowledge, whom he rewarded with generous stipends and welcomed, as a contemporary put it, "with a most joyful countenance and with sweetest words." "With the utmost zeal," writes Fra Giovanni, "he set himself to bring most renowned and learned men in both branches of the law, illustrious physicians and grave philosophers (of whom I was one), eminent theologians likewise, poets, dialecticians, orators skilled both in Latin and Greek eloquence."¹ By means of Aurispa a genuine Greek, Theodore Gaza, came to Ferrara in 1444, to profess the language of Homer and Sophocles. "Touching that Greek," wrote Carlo Marsupini to Aurispa, "who by thy doing has been summoned to Italy, and especially to Ferrara, to educate youths, all who have any dealings with the Muses and all who take thought for the glory of the Italians should be immensely beholden to thee. In this matter all will easily perceive

¹ Johannes Ferrariensis, col. 457 ; Borsetti, i. pp. 47-54 ; Voigt, i. pp. 563, 564 ; Gruyer, i. p. 39. It should be observed that these stipends were paid by the Commune during Leonello's reign.

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how greatly the higher culture is indebted to the illustrious prince Leonello.”¹ It appears questionable whether Gaza actually held a chair at Ferrara, but he was Rector of the University of Arts for the scholastic year 1448-1449.² These men, with others, the leaders of the literary and philosophic society of Ferrara itself, met at the table or in the gardens of the Marquis, who held a kind of informal Academy in the palace of Belfiore, a development and extension of those early literary gatherings and disputations recorded by Angelo Decembrio. Of these too we have a picture, somewhat idealized and tinged with a monkish colouring, in the *Annales* of that worthy friar who wrote himself down a “grave philosopher,” Fra Giovanni.

True, it must be admitted that most of these men who thus gathered round Leonello's throne were mediocrities, that there was more pedantry than genuine scholarship, much writing of Latin verse and very little real poetry. Guarino and Aurispa are, perhaps, the only two that have left any real mark in the world of letters, though many, and notably Theodore Gaza, were instrumental in the spread of culture in Italy. Tito Vespasiano Strozzi stands alone as the one genuine poet of Leonello's circle, and his chief work belongs to a later epoch.

We must not, however, pass over in silence the name of Francesco di Princivalle Ariosti, called “Peregrinus,” a figure of much interest to the student of his times.³

¹ Sabbadini, *op. cit.* p. 96.

² Segarizzi, *Michele Savonarola*, pp. 22, 67. It will be remembered that the “Studio” corresponded to our modern University, while the “Universities” were the associations of teachers and students in the different faculties.

³ This Francesco Ariosti is not to be confused with another Francesco (di Rinaldo) Ariosti, the poet's uncle, who was *senescalco* to Duke Ercole.

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Francesco, then a very young man, composed a curious little dramatic idyl, the *Iside*, consisting of two Latin elegies put into the mouths of the girl Iside and one of her numerous lovers. Iside has been converted from a mundane life by the words of a sacred preacher, *divinus orator*, to devote herself henceforth to penitence and austerity. "He has taught me to cover up my vain hair with veils, of my own will to put off the paint from my cheeks. Jewels and gems adorned my brow ; for jewels and gems the Holy Cross is given me." The representation was given before Leonello and his Court, the nobles of Ferrara and a large gathering of people, and it may, perhaps, be taken to speak highly for the moral tone of the Marchese's circle that this curious little play appears to have been a success.¹ But the greater part of Francesco Ariosti's work lies, like that of Tito Vespasiano Strozzi, in the reign of Leonello's successors. A man of considerable scientific attainments and singularly wide, if not particularly deep knowledge, he was one of the principal personages of the Court, wrote scientific treatises, devout brochures, Latin poems and vivid descriptions of contemporary events, and even ranked high among the diplomatic agents of his sovereigns.

In foreign affairs Leonello continued the policy of his father. He successfully kept clear of the political factions and interminable wars of Italy, and throughout his short reign the peace of Ferrara was not disturbed. A poet and Latinist of Hungary, John of Csenicze (better known as Janus Pannonius), came, a mere boy, some twelve or

¹ Bertoni, *op. cit.* p. 178, *note*. He adds that the author calls his representation "*fabulam veridicam*." Some elegant courtesan had, perhaps, been converted in Ferrara by a popular Lent preacher of repentance.

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thirteen years old, in the latter part of Leonello's reign to sit at the feet of Guarino, and in his chief poem, addressed to his master, the pacific city appears in a golden haze of ideal prosperity :—

Pacis et aligeri Ferraria mater Amoris,
Qua Padus in geminos iterum se dividit amnes,
Luget et ambustum fratrem pia silva sororum.¹

From his lofty watch-tower in the sky, Plato looks down upon the realization of his ideal, a wise State ruled by a philosopher King. Under Leonello's pacific and enlightened sway, to this one city has the golden age returned :—

An non Saturni sunt illic secula patris,
Bella ubi nulla fremunt, nisi quae descripta leguntur ?
Semper ubi laetas populo plaudente choreas,
Intus festa sonant, et picta palatia surgunt,
Arva foris gravido locupletat Copia cornu ?
Fortunati ambo, plebs praeside, plebe tyrannus.²

But all this, the poet continues by a pardonable and pious fiction, is the work of Guarino, whose influence had caused Leonello to be chosen prince instead of his warlike brothers and has induced him to rule in accordance with his precepts since :—

¹ "Ferrara, Mother of Peace and winged Love, where the Po into twin streams divides itself again, and the loving wood of sisters weep for their burned brother" (*Iani Pannonii, Silva Panegyrica*, 407-409). The reference is to the fable of Phaethon falling into the Po, when his wings were scorched in the sun, his sisters being changed to poplars, their tears converted into amber. Fine use of this is made by Carducci in his *Alla Città di Ferrara*.

² "Are not the times of father Saturn there, where no wars resound save those that are read of in books ? where within is ever festal music, the crowds applauding the blithe dances, and painted palaces rise, and without Plenty enriches the fields with her loaded horn ? Fortunate both, the people in its guardian, the sovereign in his people" (*ibid.* 425-430).

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Ambobus sed tu tantorum causa bonorum !
Per te, Mars alias lituis dum perstrepat oras,
Sola vacat citharis Ferraria, sola triumphat,
Principibus foecunda piis, foecunda disertis
Civibus, et pariter cunctis habitata Camenis.¹

Unlike any other sovereign of his House, he was not troubled by rival pretenders at home. The Marchesana Ricciarda had retired to Saluzzo shortly after his accession, and in 1445 Leonello and Borso sent her two sons, Ercole and Sigismondo, to the Court of Alfonso of Naples, to be brought up with Prince Ferrante at a safe distance from Ferrara. Leonello's first wife, Margherita Gonzaga, to whom he had been married in 1435, was a meet companion for her husband, a learned princess trained in the Mantuan school of Vittorino da Feltre ; she died before his accession, leaving him one son, Niccolò, who was born in 1438. In 1444, Leonello took another wife, Maria d'Aragona, natural daughter to the King of Naples ; Borso and Meliaduse brought her in triumph to Ferrara at the beginning of May. She died childless in December, 1449.

This Aragonese alliance produced a remarkable development of the Estensian diplomacy. Borso had carefully studied the condition of the Kingdom under the newly established Aragonese dynasty, and devised a scheme for the general pacification of Italy under one head. In October he returned to Naples, invited by the King, and stayed there until the end of April, 1445. In the names of Leonello and himself, speaking throughout for "the

¹ " But to both art thou the cause of so great good things ! Through thee, while Mars makes other regions ring with trumpets, Ferrara alone is free for lutes, triumphs alone, fruitful in righteous princes, fruitful in eloquent citizens, and at once the dwelling-place of all the Muses " (*ibid.* 431, 438-441). See the whole passage addressed to Guarino, lines 401-441.

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lord my brother and myself," he warned Alfonso that he was bitterly hated by his new subjects, urged him to gain their love, to arrange his expenses and husband his resources, to make peace with all the Italian potentates, and especially to gain over the Pope, Eugenius IV. Borso had visited the latter at Rome on his way, and had found him in a conciliatory disposition towards the King. Duke Filippo Maria of Milan is slowly dying; the House of the Visconti in Lombardy is "hated like the Devil"; Francesco Sforza and the Venetians are preparing to seize upon his heritage. Let his Majesty prepare to make himself master of Lombardy on the Duke's death. "By means of the House of Este," said Borso, "which is loved in Lombardy like God, your Majesty will most easily enter into this state and lordship of the Duke; you will obtain it and enjoy it pacifically and with the greatest pleasure. And when you have this, your Majesty can say that you have the better part of Italy, for it is that. And there is no doubt at all that your Majesty will be King of Italy."¹

The King proved apt, and Borso returned to Ferrara with a document empowering Leonello to arrange matters in Alfonso's name with the dying Duke. Nor did Filippo Maria evince any reluctance to the royal design; to Jacopo della Torre, Bishop of Modena, who came to him from the King, and to Luigi Mainero, Leonello's agent, in the spring of 1447, he professed himself most desirous of summoning Alfonso to Milan for the protection of his person and his states. But events moved too rapidly.

In the early summer of 1447, at the instance of Pope

¹ See the extraordinary document published by Cesare Foucard, *Proposta fatta dalla Corte Estense ad Alfonso I Re di Napoli*, pp. 708-741.

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Nicholas V, who had succeeded to Eugenius, a congress was held at Ferrara to arrange peace between Milan and Venice. The ambassadors of the chief Italian States met, under the presidency of the Cardinal of Burgundy, who represented the Pope. The congress broke up abruptly on the news of the death of Duke Filippo Maria on August 12. The attempt of the Aragonese faction, who occupied the Castello of Milan, to declare for Alfonso proved abortive, and the next day the Ambrosian Republic of Milan was proclaimed.

Pier Candido Decembrio (the elder brother of Angelo Camillo), who had been one of the two Milanese orators at the congress, now entered into the service of the Republic, and wrote the life of the late Duke, taking as his model the life of Tiberius by Suetonius. Filippo Maria had died in August, but in October Decembrio had completed the work and sent it to Leonello, as to a kind of literary dictator, to ask his opinion of it, before publishing it. The Marquis professed himself much delighted with the book and flattered at it having been left with him in this way, but strongly advised the author, seeing that his writings would be immortal, either to strike out or to veil what he had said concerning a secret vice of the Duke's. Decembrio wrote back that he had not mentioned this vice to bring infamy to his late Prince, but rather praise and glory, seeing that his not passing it over in silence would make people lend faith to what he reported in his favour. Nevertheless, he altered the passage in deference to Leonello's opinion, and the alteration was much commended by the latter.¹ In the general though, as it proved, temporary dissolution

¹ Rosmini, *op. cit.* i. pp. 109, 110 ; Borsa, *Pier Candido Decembrio*, pp. 83, 84.

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of the dominions of the Visconti, Parma—finding itself hard pressed by Alessandro Sforza, the brother of the Count Francesco—offered to return to the House of Este. But Leonello, finding Venice opposed to any annexation of this kind on his part, declined to accept it, and Parma fell into the hands of the Sforza. The Milanese Republicans somewhat resented Leonello's action, and he wrote to Decembrio on the subject, who assured him that the love of his fellow-citizens for him remained always the same.¹ This was in the spring of 1449, but before the end of the year the short-lived Ambrosian Republic was at an end, and in March, 1450, Francesco Sforza, the great condottiere, was proclaimed Duke of Milan.

On July 2 of this same year, 1450, by the intervention of Leonello and Borso, a new peace between the King of Naples and the Republic of Venice was celebrated in the Palace of Belfiore. The bringing about of this peace was Leonello's last political action.

Such then was the Marchese Leonello, as handed down to us by his contemporaries and admirers. Very probably, the smoke of so much literary incense has somewhat obscured the features of the real man, and it may possibly be, as Voigt suggests, that what by a courtly fiction passed for his own learning and his own insight was in reality Guarino's. When the courtly old humanist assures us that the Marquis placed no guards round his palace, but relied upon the love of his people, it may be a mere figure of speech; but it represents to some extent the real state of things. It is abundantly clear that he was an enlightened and popular sovereign. That he was not reputed equal to

¹ Borsa, *op. cit.* p. 84.

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his father in liberality, as Enea Silvio Piccolomini asserts,¹ may not be altogether to his discredit. He had an illegitimate son, Francesco, who was older than Niccolò and in the year of his father's second marriage went to serve under the Duke of Burgundy ; but the sweeping charges of immorality brought against him rest on questionable authority.² Probably the Ferrarese diarist does not very much overstate his case : " He was a lover of justice, of most honest life, a lover of piety, most devoted to the divine religion, a lover of the poor, liberal to the needy, a studious hearer of the Holy Scriptures, patient in adversities, moderate in prosperity. He ruled his peoples in peace with great wisdom." ³

¹ *De Viris Illustribus*, p. 16.

² Giralaldi, *Commentario delle cose di Ferrara*, p. 92 ; but cf. Calefini's statement about his contaminating Braccio's daughter, " una zovene bona e bella " (*Cronaca di Casa d'Este*, p. 287). The charges of sensuality are directly contradicted by Enea Silvio, *De Viris Illustribus*, p. 16, and I know of no contemporary authority for Voigt's accusations of tyranny and cruelty (i. p. 563).

³ *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 197.

Chapter III

THE DUKE OF MODENA

THE reigns of these two noble brothers, Leonello and Borso, the sons of Niccolò and Stella, were an age of gold for Ferrara. There was something in their character, derived perhaps from their beautiful Sienese mother, that differentiated them from their predecessors and successors of the House of Este; more blithe and genial than their kinsmen, the darker shadows in the history of Ferrara hardly appear during their reigns; conspiracies are few, and, even when they are brought to light, the repression that follows, the inevitable butchery, has not that peculiar horror and atrocity that we have noted under Alberto and shall find again when Alfonso is on the throne. No sovereigns of the fifteenth century shed so little blood as did these two. Messer Lodovico has fitly coupled them together in a much quoted stanza :—

Vedi Leonello, e vedi il primo Duce,
Fama de la sua età, l'inclito Borso,
Che siede in pace, e più trionfo adduce
Di quanti in altrui terre abbino corso.
Chiuderà Marte ove non veggia luce,
E stringerà al Furor le mani al dorso.
Di questo Signor splendido ogni intento
Sarà, che 'l popolo suo viva contento.¹

¹ *Orlando Furioso*, iii. 45. "Behold Leonello; and behold the first Duke, the glory of his age, renowned Borso, who sits in peace and

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On October 1, 1450, Leonello died in his villa of Belriguardo. With his last breath he recommended his son Niccolò, then a boy at twelve years old, to Borso, imploring him to secure the succession to him on his own death, and in the meanwhile to act as father to the lad.

Michele Savonarola has left us a curious picture of the Ferrarese magnates—the senate, as he calls the assemblage—gathered together in the Palazzo della Ragione over the great piazza, to elect a new sovereign and generally to discuss the ideal form of government. One shows that the government of a single man is best ; a second speaker would prefer an oligarchy ; a third adheres to the opinion first propounded, provided that they get a true prince and not a tyrant, one that will not spurn the counsels of the wise nor run after his own appetite. A fourth orator proposes the question : Is it better to have a prince by election or by succession ? Their late prince Niccolò has left many sons worthy of the sovereignty, and they owe so much to him that they are morally bound to choose one of them. The glorious government of Leonello has shown that their Republic will be better ruled by one of his brothers than by any other, and, by choosing thus, both the right of succession and the elective principle will be perfectly satisfied. Then a renowned doctor of arts and medicine sets forth the qualities of an ideal prince, at very considerable and pedantic length. A sixth speaker finds them all in Borso, and formally proposes him. A seventh speaker seconds the motion, which is carried with acclamation and shouts of “ Borso ! Borso ! ” which are clamorously echoed by gains more triumph than all who have invaded the lands of others. He will imprison Mars from the light of day and will bind Fury’s hands behind her back. Of this splendid Lord every intent shall be that his people may live happy.”

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the crowd in the piazza below. A deputation promptly goes to Belriguardo to inform Borso of his election.¹

Thus, apparently, did the grandfather of Fra Girolamo idealize the first meeting of the Council of the Twelve Sages after Leonello's death.² If there was any pretence of an election, it was a mere empty form, and the people dutifully acclaimed what was already an accomplished fact. Borso entered into his brother's heritage with some show of reluctance, real or assumed; but he took care that Ercole and Sigismondo, who were still away at Naples, should not be informed of Leonello's illness until his own accession was ensured. The Marchese Lodovico Gonzaga of Mantua, Leonello's brother-in-law, had hurried to Ferrara to see if he could do anything for his young nephew Niccolò, only to find Borso's position unassailable. Still both Ercole and Niccolò had adherents in the city—known as Diamanteschi and Veleschi, respectively, from the diamond and the sail that were the crests of the rival pretenders—and a conspiracy of the Veleschi was discovered, in the following year, in consequence of which one of the Trotti and Niccolò Casari perished on the scaffold.

¹ *De felici progressu illustrissimi Borsii Estensis ad marchionatum Ferrariæ, Mutinæ et Regii ducatum, comitatumque Rodigii* (Biblioteca Estense, Cod. Lat. 215). Quoted in part by Segarizzi, *Michele Savonarola*, pp. 37-40.

² The seven speakers at the meeting are: Franciscus Mauri, Petrus Ceri, Paulus Bondenus, Nicolaus Agrippa (so at least in the codex at Modena; Segarizzi has Niccolò da Ripa), Magister Nigrisolus, Antonius Gaius, and Cato Senior. The Nigrisoli and Cato were well-known Ferrarese families. Fra Giovanni states that Agostino Valla, who was judge of the twelve Sages, called a meeting and proposed the election of Borso (*Annales*, col. 461); and from the fact that this "Augustinus Valla Pater Patriæ (vel, ut nostro more loquar, Sapientum Censor)," who undoubtedly played the chief part on this occasion, is not mentioned, we may suspect that Savonarola's account is a mere literary exercise.

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Pope Nicholas V promptly renewed the investiture of the vicariate of Ferrara to Borso and to his heirs, under a considerably reduced annual tribute.

Borso raised Ferrara to its height of fame and glory. Under his rule the State assumed the aspect, acquired the peculiar characteristics that are reflected in the romance of Boiardo, the epic of Ariosto. In his fourth Latin eclogue the former poet dates the beginning of a glorious age of earthly blessedness from his accession, in words not remotely suggested by the famous fourth Virgilian eclogue, and, in another poem of the same pastoral collection, he hails his pacific rule in lines of glowing fervour :—

Salve, Estense decus, terrarum gloria, Borsi ;
Quo duce, sideribus terras Astrea relictis
Incolit, et prisci rursus, quo principe, mores
Aureaque aeterni redierunt otia veris.
Salve, Estense decus, sub quo fulgentia Martis
Agmina et horrendo nescimus classica cantu !¹

With Borso, a new epoch begins for the House of Este. Hitherto, although usually styled “Marchese di Ferrara,” the prince was, strictly speaking, only titular Marquis of Este, vicar *in temporalibus* of the Church in Ferrara, feudatory of the Empire in Modena, Reggio and Rovigo. But from 1452 dates the Duchy of Modena, which was destined to survive even the French Revolution, only to be absorbed in the new Italy of the Risorgimento.

At the beginning of 1452, Frederick of Hapsburg, King of the Romans, came to Italy for his imperial coronation,

¹ “Hail, honour of Este, glory of the world, Borso ; under whose sway Astraea has left the stars to dwell on earth ; with whom as prince, the manners of the olden time and the golden ease of eternal spring have returned. Hail, honour of Este, under whom we know not the flashing ranks of Mars, and the fearful music of the battle-trumpets !” (*Pastoralia*, vi. 65-70).

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with his brother, Duke Albert of Austria, his nephew, King Ladislaus of Hungary and Bohemia, and a train of some twelve hundred horsemen. At the passage of the Adige he found Borso waiting for him, with a number of the minor potentates of central Italy and a goodly company of Ferrarese nobles. Borso presented the monarch with a royal gift of horses and falcons, and brought him from Rovigo over a long bridge of ships to Ferrara, where for ten days he kept him and his train in a succession of festivities and sumptuous entertainments, extorting a sort of promise from him that he would consider the matter of the duchy on his return. The fact was that the Germans had not yet acquired the easy morality of Italy, and the Caesar elect had some scruples about thus elevating a bastard to the rank of a Duke of the Empire.

These scruples, however, were banished by Borso's winning personality, his universal popularity and the favour he enjoyed with the Court of Rome; and, when Frederick returned from his coronation in May, he formally raised the imperial fiefs of Modena and Reggio into a duchy. On Ascension Day, 1452, after High Mass in the Duomo, the Emperor vested himself in full imperial robes, with the crown of the Holy Roman Empire upon his head, and, surrounded by his nobles and attended by the ambassadors of the Italian powers, solemnly enthroned himself on a great platform erected in the piazza. So great was the crowd, that covered not only the square, but all the front of the Cathedral, the episcopal palace and the Palazzo della Ragione, that, Michele Savonarola assures us, nothing save human beings could be seen. "Frederick, as he gazed upon the people in their numbers, was astounded, and considering the richness of the attire

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of their nobles, he turned to his followers and said : ‘ Verily this is a city worthy of the Empire.’ The other Germans too, in the tribunes away from him, were so amazed at the multitude of men, at the precious dresses of gold and silk, that they said to each other that all Germany itself did not contain so many rich robes. And they wondered at the beauty and goodliness of the men and women, which showed them that those who blamed the air of Ferrara were in the wrong.”¹ A sudden burst of music, a mingling of martial trumpets with the softer strains of flutes, followed by thundering plaudits of “ Borso ! Borso ! ” and “ Duca ! Duca ! ” announced the advent of the hero of the day.

Preceded by four hundred nobles on horseback, bearing white, red and green banners, Borso rode out of the Castello Vecchio ; he was dressed in red silk and cloth of gold, covered with gems, with a pointed cap equally gorgeous and round his neck a collar of jewels valued at a fabulous sum in golden ducats. The acclamations rose higher and higher as he entered the piazza. The nobles, still mounted, formed a semicircle, out of which Borso advanced alone, dismounted, ascended the platform and knelt at Caesar’s feet. There he was solemnly proclaimed Duke of Modena and Reggio, Count of Rovigo ; the ducal robe of crimson and ermine was placed over his shoulders ; the standards of the three imperial cities and of justice, the naked sword and the golden sceptre were put into his hands. Then Borso took his seat among the princes of the Empire, next to the Duke of Austria, while the Emperor conferred the order of knighthood upon certain noble Ferrarese and

¹ *De felici progressu*, etc., quoted by Segarizzi, *op. cit.* pp. 73, 74. The reader will not fail to notice the professional touch in Michele’s last words.

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others, including the little Niccolò da Correggio, a mere child, the Duke's nephew, and young Galeotto della Mirandola. At Caesar's special command, Monsignor Enea Silvio Piccolomini, then Bishop of Siena, delivered an address in Italian, so that the people too might understand, "in praise of the Estensi, and about the new dignity and the supreme merits of Borso," as he tells us. At the end, the Emperor rose from his throne; at once the Bishop of Ferrara and his clergy, who were present in full pontificals, intoned the *Te Deum. Laudamus*, in which the whole assemblage joined, and led the procession to the Duomo, bearing the relics of St. George and St. Maurelius, the patron saints and protectors of Ferrara. Before the high altar, the newly made Duke took the oath of fidelity to the Emperor, and presented him with a rich collar or necklace adorned with jewels, which had belonged to his father and which was valued at 40,000 ducats—the whole ceremony terminating with the benediction of the Bishop of the city. "All the ambassadors who were present," writes Enea Silvio, "commended what Caesar had done, and all Italy said that it was a benefit well placed."¹

As soon as he had dispatched the Caesar upon his homeward journey to Austria, Borso made a triumphal progress through his two newly created duchies, with the leading nobles of Ferrara and a thousand horsemen in his train. He had a sumptuous and showy reception, such as his heart loved. In each town through which he passed the inhabitants poured out to meet him with songs and flowers.

¹ *Historia Friderici Imperatoris*, pp. 94, 95; Frizzi, iv. pp. 20-23; *Diario Ferrarese*, coll. 198-200; Johannes Ferrariensis, coll. 463-466.

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At Modena, triumphal chariots met him at the gate of the city, with St. Geminianus surrounded by angels in one and in another the four Cardinal Virtues "adorned to the likeness of Venus"; the streets along which he rode were carpeted with rich cloths, while scattered before him were perfumes and flowers of every kind, from which a sweet and mingled odour rose, as in Dante's Valley of the Princes. Here he stayed twelve days, in a succession of feasts and sports, and met his half-brother Ercole, who had come unexpectedly from Naples to congratulate him.

Fired by the example of their neighbour and rival, the good people of Reggio, clergy and laity alike, rose to the occasion, and gave their first Duke a greeting to be ranked (says our Fra Giovanni) "among the most rare and most lovely spectacles." When Borso, accompanied by young Ercole, approached the walls, the governor of the city came out to meet him with all the garrison in battle array, with the nobles of the district on horseback bearing branches of olive in their hands, and the multitude shouting "Duca ! Duca !" Thousands of children were waiting for him at the gate, crowned with flowers, waving olive branches and little flags with the ducal arms, raising shrill cheers, as Borso and Ercole, preceded by Feltrino Boiardo bearing the sword of Reggio, drew near. There was a halt at the gate. A great chariot appeared, elaborately designed, upon which San Prospero, the chief patron of the city, seemed to float in air surrounded by angels, while below him was a kind of revolving wheel in which were eight other angels with musical instruments, singing Borso's praises. One of the angels turned to the Saint, courteously bade him surrender the keys of the city and the royal

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sceptre which he held, and then, with an elegant oration, solemnly delivered them to the Duke. Then came another triumphal chariot, of most gorgeous aspect, drawn by concealed horses and bearing an empty royal throne. Behind it stood Justice, with the sword and scales, attended by a beautiful boy. Angels held the canopy over her head; Regulus, Cato, Numa, and Cincinnatus sat at the corners of the chariot with angels bearing the ducal standards, while armed youths rode on either side. Admonished by Justice's attendant genius, Borso listened to the discourses of these Roman elders and edified all beholders by his attentive bearing, while they assured him that he surpassed Caesar in clemency, Octavianus in prudence, Trajan in justice, Titus in liberality, Cato in gravity, Scaevola in magnitude of soul, Antoninus in piety, and either equalled or outstripped every other famous personage in his own special virtue. Next came a car in the form of a trireme, which seemed to be rowed by ten Saracens, but was in reality drawn by concealed men. A fourth chariot was drawn by artificial unicorns, Borso's own chosen device, and bore a palm-tree, among the branches of which sat Charity with her flaming torch.

To the ringing of bells, the sound of trumpets, the music of pipes and flutes, the whole procession moved on to the church of San Pietro, where the Prince of the Apostles himself in a glory, with two angels, descended from the west front and placed a laurel crown upon Borso's head, who received it with all reverence. On two lofty pillars, set opposite each other, were Idolatry, a lay figure, and Faith, a beautiful girl who uttered a devout exhortation, at the sound of which the rival pillar fell down and was shattered to pieces. As the procession swept on towards

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the chief piazza, Caesar appeared with seven nymphs, representing the seven Virtues, and Borso was exhorted to pursue them. The Duke dismounted and entered the Duomo, "even as a spouse is brought to her husband" (so our good Minorite puts it). After praying for some while before the altar, he seated himself upon a throne in front of the church, and the pageant paraded before him again. Charity hailed him as the "Mirror of Christians," the "Only Delight of wretched mortals," the "Worthy Rose of the World." San Prospero offered up devout prayers to heaven for his preservation. From the top of the Palazzo del Capitano, three angels flew down and "with most sweet harmony" gave Borso a palm in sign of peace.¹

Peace, indeed, was to be the prevailing note of Borso's government. Curiously unlike his father and brother in many other respects, he was bent upon continuing their foreign policy, of keeping Ferrara free from war and making it a common meeting-ground, as it were, for the representatives of all the Italian powers to arrange the peace of the peninsula.

A few years later, in May, 1459, Enea Silvio came again to Ferrara, but now as Pope Pius II, on his way to Mantua in that vain but heroic attempt to unite the powers of Christendom against the Turks, who, as he put it, had "taken the royal city of Constantine, slain his namesake,

¹ These pageants, which were devised by Malatesta Ariosti, are described in full by Johannes Ferrariensis, coll. 466-472. (I have not been able to consult Adolfo Levi's publication, referred to in the *Giornale Storico della Letteratura Italiana*, xxxv.) Borso was delighted at the entertainment provided for him, and testified his satisfaction by remitting, entirely or in part, a number of unpopular taxes which the citizens of Reggio had paid to the ducal chancery.

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butchered his people, profaned the temples of the high God, and defiled Santa Sophia, the noble work of Justinian, with the foul rite of Mahomet.”¹ Borso expected great things from this visit; on the elevation of the Cardinal of Siena to the Pontificate, he had held public rejoicings, exulted in his kinship with the Holy Father (who acknowledged himself related to the Tolomei, the family of Borso’s mother), and given thanks to God that a Pope had been elected from whom there was nothing that he could not obtain. “Nor would he have been wrong in so thinking,” writes Pius, “if he had asked for things more fit for us to grant.”²

The Duke himself rode out to meet the Pontiff, with the Lords of Forlì, Cesena, Rimini, Mirandola, Correggio and Carpi, with young Niccolò di Leonello and seven bastards of the House with their attendants.³ The streets were strewn with flowers and covered with cloths, everything rang with music and the air trembled with bells, as, in advance of the papal procession, there came, surrounded with men carrying lighted torches, a spotless white horse, upon which was the Blessed Sacrament, “the Body of Our Lord Messer Jesus Christ,” Pius himself following, robed in white and with a mitre upon his head. At the Porta di San Pietro, Borso dismounted, knelt and kissed the Pope’s foot, offering up to him the keys of the city.

¹ Address to the Congress at Mantua. *Opera*, p. 907.

² *Commentarii*, ii. p. 102.

³ Alberto, Gurone, Rinaldo, half-brothers of the Duke; Francesco, bastard of Leonello; Niccolò, Scipione, Polidoro, bastards of Meliaduse (who had been dispensed from his ecclesiastical orders and died in 1452). Niccolò di Leonello was that rare creature an Estense born in lawful wedlock—a thing so unnatural that even Burkhardt (English translation, pp. 21, 46) and Mrs. Ady (*Beatrice d’Este*, p. 5) seem unable to realize it.

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During the eight days that Pius stayed in Ferrara, the festivities were for the most part of a religious nature; on the feast of the Corpus Domini, the Pope granted a plenary indulgence and himself carried the Blessed Sacrament in the procession. Borso was persistent in his demands. He wanted the Pope to make him Duke of Ferrara and to remit the tribute, which meant to surrender all the rights that the Church claimed in the city. Pius answered that he could not deprive the Roman Church of her tribute, but offered him the duchy with the retention of the tribute—which Borso refused. “Nevertheless he obtained other concessions of great weight, and hoped to receive greater in the future.”¹ On the Pope’s departure, Borso gave him “a sideboard all of silver, most worthy, which was deemed of the value of 8,000 ducats, which his Holiness accepted and then gave back to the Duke, saying that God knew to whom it would remain after his death.”²

At the Congress at Mantua, Borso’s orators, “in order,” says the Pope, “that they might seem to be doing more than the rest,” promised in the Duke’s name the huge sum of 300,000 gold ducats for the expedition against the Turks, “not without admiration of the hearers.”³ But, on his return from the Congress in January, the Pope would not stop at Ferrara for more than one night. Borso met him on the Po near Rovigo in a Bucentaur, surrounded by a whole flotilla of gaily adorned smaller boats, with music and pageants all along the shore as they moved, so that

¹ *Commentarii*, ii. pp. 102, 103.

² *Storia di Ferrara* (apparently by Ugo Caleffini), MS. in the Biblioteca Nazionale of Florence, xxv. 8. 539, f. 40.

³ *Commentarii*, iii. p. 169.

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it made "a wondrous sight," as Pius has it. On the ship Borso signed the decree regarding the levying of tithes for the Crusade ; but, in the following March, he refused to let them be collected.¹ In fact, this papal visit to Ferrara had left both parties in a bad humour with each other, and strained a friendship of fifteen years' standing. Although Borso presently furnished two (apparently Venetian) ships and a few men to the great undertaking, he was bitterly disappointed in Pius, while Pius, no less incensed against Borso, went so far as to threaten him with excommunication.²

Pius has left us a portrait of Borso as he first saw him in the days of Leonello, when as Enea Silvio, the imperial secretary (fresh from that interview with Pope Eugenius IV, which Pintoricchio has recorded in the fourth fresco in the Library of the Duomo at Siena), he passed through Ferrara in 1445 on his way back to the King of the Romans. "The Ferrarese," he says, "worship him almost as God. He is more handsome than words can tell, facetious and modest, distinguished for his liberality, robust in his body and without any blemish."³ This extraordinary beauty passed off with his early manhood, and in later life he grew stout and coarsened considerably in appearance ; but to the almost divine honours, apparently proceeding from sincere admiration, paid him by his courtiers and people, all the chroniclers bear ample witness. Bluff and hearty in his manners, genial and good-natured, he loved magnificent pomp and display, all things that were bright and splendid, and was passionately addicted to hunting and

¹ *Commentarii*, iv. pp. 172, 173 ; Pastor, ii. document 39.

² Pastor, ii. p. 169.

³ *De Viris Illustribus*, p. 17.

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field-sports of all kinds. He would ride through the streets of Ferrara in gorgeous robes, covered with gold and costliest jewels, dazzling the eyes of all beholders. "Never was there a Lord who gave so much audience publicly, as he did every day. He always seemed laughing, and never let any one leave him discontented."¹ His generosity and liberality were more than imperial, and became proverbial in Italy: "Whoso would find Heaven open, let him experience the liberality of Duke Borso."² His benefactions to the Church were most lavish, and the noble Carthusian monastery of San Cristoforo, that he founded, recalls his name even to this day. "The Signor hath made it so magnificent," writes Caleffini, "that it would suffice for the Pope." Not only towards his courtiers and favourites—such men as Michele Savonarola, Girolamo Castelli (Savonarola's successor as chief physician of the Court), Lodovico Casella, his privy counsellor whom he called his "right eye," Teofilo Calcagnino, his handsome young companion—was he prodigal in gifts of land and palaces; but even his barber Pietro, his jester Scocola, that "nobile, facetissimo e soavissimo buffone," and the peasant woman who offered him mushrooms when out hunting, did not go without ample rewards. "Never," wrote the *buffone*, "has his Excellence left his poor Scocola in the

¹ Ugo Caleffini, *Croniche del Duca Ercole*, f. 9; *Storia di Ferrara*, f. 56v. I may here state that, when referring to Caleffini, by *Croniche del Duca Ercole* I mean the Costabili manuscript (Brit. Museum, Add. MS. 22, 324), while *Storia di Ferrara* is the codex of the National Library at Florence, and *Cronaca di Casa d'Este* the rhymed chronicle printed by Cappelli.

² Luzio and Renier, *Niccolò da Correggio*, i. p. 208. Cf. the long list of Borso's donations in Ugo Caleffini, *Cronaca di Casa d'Este*, pp. 293-301.

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lurch in any of his necessities.”¹ The fame of Borso’s magnificent proceedings and of his phenomenal lavishness passed even the bounds of Europe; eastern potentates sent embassies and offerings to him, under the impression that he was the sovereign of all Italy.

It is manifest that this magnificence bordered on prodigality, and the ducal benefactions were too frequently bestowed upon unworthy recipients. A number of corrupt and avaricious officials simply preyed upon the people, and remained as an evil legacy to Borso’s successor. Even in Borso’s lifetime, Michele Savonarola satirized the manners of the Court in his *De Nuptiis Battibecco et Serrabocca*, stating plainly that “the giving of robes, horses, possessions and money to buffoons and unworthy men, diminishes the love of the people.”² The Duke coupled his lavishness in rewarding with an unbending severity in punishing, using the latter as a means to the former. The goods of aristocratic offenders—such as that Uguccone dalla Badia, one of the ducal secretaries, who in 1460, for not having revealed a conspiracy which he did not take seriously, “was accompanied by the Duke himself into Castel Vecchio to end his life”—were confiscated and given to the favourites and agents, whereby “many from servants have become gentlemen.” As to minor offenders, he never once showed mercy to a thief throughout his reign.³

The Duke was an able administrator and, with all this external magnificence, knew how to keep his lavishness

¹ See Bertoni, *Buffoni alla Corte di Ferrara*, in the *Rivista d'Italia*, vi. fasc. iii.-iv.

² See Cappelli, *Fra Girolamo Savonarola*, p. 305, where an account of this curious work is given.

³ Ugo Caleffini, *Cronaca di Casa d'Este*, p. 293; *Storia di Ferrara*, f. 56.

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within bounds. Richer than his predecessors and successor, he nevertheless had recourse to strange financial methods. Not unfrequently, professors of the Studio, painters to the Court, and other creditors, were not paid in money, but by the cession to them of debts due to the ducal treasury. Throughout the duchy heavy fines were extorted for the infringement of all kinds of petty regulations, and the officials were instructed to "suck all the juice" they could out of the ducal subjects. Blasphemy was a penal offence and a great source of income to the ducal coffers—a man being even fined for saying "God Himself could not do this." In these cases, two-thirds went to the State and a third to the informer. One result of this was that spying became a most lucrative calling in Ferrara.¹

Nevertheless, Borso kept his popularity to the last. In many respects he was open and simple-hearted as a child; an "anima innocente," his successor called him in after years. In the midst of the moral corruption of his Court, surrounded by the bastard kindred of his House, he remained sincerely and devoutly religious; almost alone among the princes of the Renaissance, his private life appears to have been pure and blameless, beyond the reach of calumny.

Leonello, with the aid of the elder Guarino, had imbued Ferrara with the humanistic spirit of the Classical Revival. Borso was devoid of all scholarship; but he continued Leonello's generous patronage to scholars and men of letters, rewarding with a lavish hand the dedications that they presented to him, and added what was needed to prepare the soil to produce the splendid flower of the Italian Romantic Epic. His very lack of scholarship stimulated vernacular

¹ Cf. A. Venturi, *L'Arte a Ferrara nel periodo di Borso d'Este*, pp. 696, 697.

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literature in his circle. The Duke knew no Latin, and his wealthy favourite, Teofilo Calcagnino, shared his ignorance, the result being that those men of letters who sought their patronage were compelled to adopt the *sermone moderno*, the vulgar tongue.

“ I had determined,” wrote Carlo da San Giorgio to Borso, after the conspiracy of the Pio of Carpi, “ for the defence of thy glorious name, as also for the information of those that come after us, to write in Latin concerning the treason that was lately plotted against thee. But Fortune, the foe of every virtuous man, hath not vouchsafed to add to thy other singular ornaments the ornament of letters, the which is the most excellent that man can have. To prove this, infinite reasons could be alleged, inasmuch as thou canst not appreciate the worth and the power of literature; but, since there is no remedy for it, we will bear it, as God wills, in peace. When I had presented my little book to thee, I was harshly and furiously abused by my magnificent and dearest gossip, Messer Teofilo, and as it were calumniated, as though I had committed an enormous error in writing such a business in Latin and not in our vulgar speech. I pardon him, seeing that also he is one of those who know not letters, which, among his other excellent virtues, would shine out like precious stones. And, wishing to do something that should please you all—thee, my dear and only Lord, and the others thy brothers and companions—as is my desire and duty, in order that thou mayest get some pleasure by reading in the vulgar tongue what thou couldst not otherwise taste by reason of thy lack of letters, I have rendered this little work of mine into the vernacular, albeit there is as much difference in sweetness and suavity between one language and the other, as there is between a sweet and delicate wine

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and another, rough and unpleasant, that one is compelled by thirst to drink.”¹

This writing down to poor Borso's level is delightful ; but other translators took a different tone. “Right humbly do I pray and beseech thee, my dear Lord,” writes Polismagna to the Duke, in a letter accompanying his version of Pier Candido Decembrio's *Laudi della Città di Milano*, “that thou mayest deign, with thy wonted mansuetude, to excuse my ignorance with those who shall blame me, and especially concerning the words used in this translation. I know that thou art Ferrarese ; I, too, am Ferrarese ; and Ferrara, renowned city of Italy, has produced us, reared us, and brought us to our present estate ; and, therefore, I could not manage the language save in the Ferrarese idiom, the which, in my opinion, has not less elegance than any other Italian speech. So if thou art pleased, I think that every man will be satisfied.”²

The language in question is, however, something quite distinct from the local dialect of Ferrara. It is a variety of the Lombard type of vernacular, a blending, we may say, of Dante's courtly ideal Italian with many words and forms of the Ferrarese and other Emilian or Lombard dialects ; with various local modifications, it is the language used by the literary circles and by the Courts of Mantua and the other petty states of Northern Italy. Its highest flight is

¹ Dedicatory letter prefixed to *La Congiura dei Pio contro Borso d'Este*, edited by A. Cappelli, pp. 377, 378. *Letters* is here used as the technical term for *Latin*.

² Bertoni, *La Biblioteca Estense*, p. 123. Against Cappelli and Venturi, Bertoni shows that this Polismagna, a Ferrarese, who appears to have been also a miniaturist, is not to be identified with Carlo da San Giorgio, who was one of Borso's chamberlains and by origin a Bolognese (*op. cit.*, p. 55, note 1). Polismagna also translated Decembrio's life of Filippo Maria Visconti.

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found a quarter of a century later in the romantic poem of Boiardo.¹ Polismagna is only one of a number of similar translators seeking Borso's patronage ; many men of letters in like manner presented him with translations of their own Latin books, or of those of their contemporaries, or of the classical authors ; some—but comparatively few—composed original poems in Italian for his acceptance.² Thus “ the succession of Borso to Leonello was providential, inasmuch as the former succeeded in tempering the influence of humanism by promoting and protecting vernacular literature ; and so, while the classicism planted by Leonello remained and continued to flourish, the *sermone moderno* was also cultivated, to correspond with Borso's personal desires.”³

And, together with this development and cultivation of the vernacular, a special taste and fashion for the romances of chivalry, alike in the French originals and in Italian translations, spread through the Ferrarese Court ; the romances of the Carolingian cycle, or *materia di Francia*, the romances of the Arthurian cycle, or *materia di Bretagna*, which Dante had styled “ the most beauteous fables of King Arthur ” and Pier Candido Decembrio stigmatised as “ incredible French lies.”

This had begun, as we have seen, in the days of the Marchese Niccolò III ; the ladies of Leonello's Court were in the habit of embroidering in gold upon their sleeves an amorous motto culled from some chivalrous French story ;

¹ Bertoni, *op. cit.*, pp. 123–125.

² The curious anonymous capitoli in *terza rima* in the Vatican Library (Cod. Capponiano, 219) and the decidedly interesting canzone by Filippo Nuvolone, addressed to Borso at the end of a volume of erotic verse, as to one insensible to the darts of love (British Museum, Add. MS., 22, 335), are good examples. I have given some account of these, with extracts, in Appendix I.

³ Venturi, *op. cit.*, p. 690.

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but in the days of Borso it became a perfect passion. The romances, which the ducal library already possessed in good store, were perpetually being borrowed, in great request among the courtiers and ladies—those of the Arthurian cycle being especially favoured. In the winter evenings, in the warmed and brilliantly lighted halls of the gay Corte Vecchia, or during the long summer afternoons in the gardens of Belfiore or Belriguardo, to the sound of the splashing water of the marble fountains and the music of the birds among the laurels and myrtles, the princesses and their cavaliers lingered over the loves of Lancelot and Tristram, followed Merlin to his living tomb, or even at times—a touch of mysticism being inherent in the Ferrarese character—strove to ascend to the suprasensible heights attained by those who achieved the quest of the Holy Graal.¹ Borso himself loved these books. He had Italian versions of the *Merlin* and *Lancelot* richly illuminated, and we find him in 1460, while in his villeggiatura, sending to the library for a *Lancelot* in French with which to correct one in Italian.² Thus was the ground in Ferrara prepared for the romance of Boiardo, the epic of Ariosto.

Not that the classical studies promoted by Leonello were neglected. Little though Borso personally cared for such things, he fully realized that to promote culture of every kind tended to the glory of the sovereign. A more thorough organiser of the finances and richer than Leonello, he could afford to be no less generous than he to the University. The elder Guarino still remained, as high in honour and favour as ever, until his death at the ripe age of ninety, in

¹ Cf. Bertoni, *op. cit.*, cap. iv. ; Venturi, *op. cit.*, pp. 692, 693 ; Pio Rajna, *Le Fonti dell' Orlando Furioso*, Introduction.

² Venturi, *op. cit.*, p. 692.

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1460 ; he left behind him a large family of sons, of whom one of the younger, Battista, had inherited not a little of his father's talents. Lascaris and other Greek exiles were cordially welcomed and hospitably entertained. Pier Candido Decembrio, after fishing for an invitation through Lodovico Casella, came to the Court at the beginning of 1467, and stayed on into the next reign, with a generous pension, very jealous of the great fame and reputation that Guarino had left behind him, while he himself was adulated by Tito Vespasiano Strozzi and young Niccolò da Correggio—the latter hailing him as the greatest example of virtue and glory, the most splendid light of their age that God had granted to youth.¹ And the Latin poetry that Leonello had loved continued to be the medium of courtly flattery—and, in the case of two poets, of something greater. Tito Strozzi continued singing his own loves, and celebrating the virtues of his patron, in the language and rhythms of the lyric and elegiac poets of Rome—though he felt the new impulse sufficiently to admit that books written in the vernacular, “translated in elegant and ornate language,” may be read with consolation and profit, and therefore to translate at the suggestion of his brother Lorenzo, and for the benefit of Borso, the *De Vita Solitaria* of Petrarca.² And, both tendencies meeting in the one great poet of the day, to Borso's reign belong the first two poetic works, a book of Latin eclogues and a volume of Italian lyrics, of Messer Tito's famous nephew—the Count Matteo Maria Boiardo.

Nor was Dante neglected. In the spring of 1459 public lectures were given on the *Divina Commedia*, the commentary

¹ Borsa, *op. cit.*, pp. 129, 130.

² See Tito's letter to Lorenzo, prefixed to his translation (edited by Antonio Ceruti, Bologna, 1879).

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of Benvenuto da Imola being taken as the text-book, and the lecturer, whose name has not been preserved, exhorted the Duke not only to study the divine poem, but himself to be present at the delivery of the lectures.¹

The years during which Borso reigned in Ferrara witnessed the growth and formation of an independent school of Ferrarese painting—that robust and original school, which was little regarded until the rise of the modern scientific art-criticism of Morelli and his followers, but is now recognized as having contributed not a little to the making of Raphael and Correggio.

This was probably due only in a very limited and secondary way to any active influence, or to the personal merits of the Duke himself. Borso appreciated the fine arts, mainly in so far as they lent themselves to adorning his own triumphs and enhanced his magnificent display. But the liberal patronage extended to artists, both native and foreign, under Niccolò and Leonello, had prepared the ground. The reign of Leonello was, as Venturi has remarked, an epoch of assimilation in the history of Ferrarese painting. From the first, he welcomed the greatest foreign masters to his Court; Vittore Pisanello of Verona, Jacopo Bellini of Venice, the great Andrea Mantegna of Padua in his youth, all worked for him; even the Fleming, Roger Van der Weyden, left traces of his activity in Ferrara. The native painters during Leonello's reign were of little consequence, save for one remarkable exception; Giovanni Oriolo, an imitator of Pisanello, caught something of his model's inspiration, and his one undoubted work, the signed portrait of the Marquis himself, now in the National Gallery of

¹ I. Del Lungo, *Dante ne' Tempi di Dante*, pp. 412, 413.

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London, has considerable merit, alike in colour and in presentation of character.

Oriolo was still working in the first part of Borso's reign. Besides him, in the early fifties of the Quattrocento, we find two other Ferrarese painters of note. Bono da Ferrara signs himself a disciple of Pisanello in his "St. Jerome" in the National Gallery, and proves himself an apt pupil, as the comparison with his master's two pictures in the same collection will show. Called to Padua, to labour with the pupils of Squarcione in San Cristoforo, he altered his style to match his new surroundings, and did not succeed in holding his own. Galasso Galassi, a painter of less importance, who is recorded in a highly cynical story told by Lodovico Ariosto in his third Satire, is still known by a "Deposition from the Cross" in the Gallery at Ferrara, and various works at Bologna, which show him a painter of little merit and less individuality.

To these various foreign influences from Verona, Padua and Venice (and, perhaps, indirectly that of Flanders), that went to the making of the Ferrarese school of painting, must be added that of Pietro dei Franceschi, the only great master from outside that Borso invited to Ferrara.¹ In the latter part of the Duke's reign, we find the school definitely constituted, with two painters almost of the front rank in the story of art: Cosimo Tura and Francesco del Cossa.

Cosimo Tura was born about the year 1430 at Ferrara,

¹ Vasari states that Pietro "painted many rooms in the palace that were afterwards destroyed by Duke Ercole the elder, when he restored the palace in modern fashion." The reference is obviously not to the Schifanoia, as frequently supposed, but to the Corte Vecchia, which was reconstructed in the years 1479 and 1480. Pietro also executed frescoes in S. Agostino which have perished.

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but appears to have studied under Squarcione at Padua, where he was probably Mantegna's fellow-pupil, and perhaps at Venice. Returning to his native city, he succeeded Angelo da Siena as chief painter to the Court in 1458, and was continually employed by the Duke, not only in decorating his palaces with frescoes and in painting portraits of the most noteworthy persons of his circle, but also in designing tapestries, triumphal arches and the other indispensable accessories of Estensian pomp and parade. A powerful and accurate draughtsman, Tura is a robust and original artist, peculiar and not usually attractive in his choice of types, vigorous in his execution, with angular and strongly marked folds of drapery, and with a bright scheme of colouring, which is singularly individual, if frequently hard and crude ; in his altar-pieces, he adorns the Madonna's throne with classical decorations, as befits a pupil of the learned Squarcione. Francesco del Cossa was some eight years the junior of Tura, and was more directly influenced by Pietro dei Franceschi ; a no less powerful, but more refined painter, as the comparison of his " St. Hyacinth " in the National Gallery with Tura's " St. Jerome " and " Madonna " in the same collection will serve to show. Borso, while bounteous to Tura, does not seem to have appreciated Cossa at his true worth. Finding himself inadequately remunerated, Francesco left Ferrara in 1470,¹ and removed to Bologna, where the Bentivoglio proved more liberal and discerning. The churches and picture-gallery still bear witness to his stay in Bologna, where he died in 1480.

¹ His letter of March 25, 1470, to Borso, complaining of his deferred payment for the frescoes in Schifanoia, and that, although he has painted the three compartments towards the ante-chamber by himself, he is receiving no more than the others, was published by A. Venturi in the *Kunstfreund* (Berlin, 1885, coll. 130, 131).

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During the last two or three years of Borso's life, a third painter appears upon the scene in the person of the Duke's half-brother, Baldassare d'Este, sometimes called Baldassare of Reggio, who also worked as a medallist. Documentary evidence, recently brought to light, has proved that this hitherto mysterious personage was undoubtedly the son of the Marchese Niccolò III.¹ He appears to have returned from Lombardy to Ferrara about the year 1469. The famous series of portraits that he painted for Borso and his successor has entirely perished, and though a "Pietà" in a private collection at Ferrara is doubtfully ascribed to him, it is uncertain whether we have any authentic work preserved to us from his hand, save what may be regarded as his among the frescoes of Schifanoia, where, at Borso's orders, he repainted no fewer than thirty-six heads of the Duke, which were originally the work of Francesco del Cossa. It may be presumed that this slight was one of the causes that impelled the latter painter to shake the dust of Ferrara from off his feet. Baldassare was essentially a Court painter; more highly remunerated than even Cosimo Tura, he held various small offices under his reigning brothers, especially for some years that of captain of one of the gates of Reggio, in which capacity his life touched, by no means pleasantly,

¹ In a document of 1489, discovered by Count Ippolito Malaguzzi, and published by Venturi (*Archivio Storico dell'Arte*, i. pp. 42, 43), he is described as "Baldassare of Este, son of the late most illustrious Lord Niccolò, Marquis of Este, at present captain of the Porta Castello of the city of Reggio." I cannot, however, accept Venturi's suggestion, which is adopted by Gruyer (ii. p. 42), that his mother was Anna dei Roberti. The utterly different position at the Court held by the children of this aristocratic lady—Beatrice, Rinaldo and Bianca Maria—makes it impossible to believe that Baldassare was their full brother.

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that of Boiardo. We shall have occasion, further on, to return to him and to Cosimo Tura.

Time and the political vicissitudes of the Emilian signories have dealt cruelly with the painters of Ferrara, and much of their work has perished with the palaces of the sovereigns that they served. The chief surviving achievement of Ferrarese painting in the fifteenth century is linked to the supreme artistic monument of Borso's reign in the Palazzo Schifanoia. This was built by the Marchese Alberto in 1391 as a hunting-lodge; but Borso added the first floor from the design of Pietro di Benvenuto, and used it as a residence in the summer months. It stands in one of Ferrara's most deserted streets, its rich portal surmounted by the ducal arms of Este with Borso's favourite badge of the Unicorn. Two rooms alone recall its past glories. One, the less important, has an exceedingly rich ceiling executed by Domenico di Paris, who had worked under Donatello at Padua. The other, the chief hall of the palace, was covered with frescoes between 1467 and 1470—the work, as recent research and criticism appear conclusively to prove, of Cosimo Tura and Francesco del Cossa and their pupils alone, although certain portions—the heads, for instance, of Duke Borso in the historical scenes—were at least repainted by Baldassare d'Este.

In three superimposed zones, which originally went all round the hall but have been preserved on two walls alone, these frescoes set forth the twelve months of the year, figured in the triumphal pageants of the presiding deities of antiquity and illustrated in the occupations of men and women in each; the signs of the Zodiac and allegorical figures connected with them; scenes from the life of Duke Borso, the whole being devised as a pictorial glorification

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of his pacific reign and of the blessings resulting to his subjects. Worked into this scheme of decoration are the most admirable and realistic transcripts from Italian life of the epoch ; scenes from the country and the city, the camp and the Court. Hardly elsewhere shall we see so complete a representation of the outward life and goodly seeming of an ideal city of the early Renaissance. We are shown the peasants pruning the vines, mowing the hay, sowing, reaping, and the like ; we watch the vintage, follow the condottieri leading their mercenaries through the land, or the courtly trains passing to and from the chase. A state marriage is celebrated before our eyes—perhaps, as M. Gustave Gruyer has suggested, that of Bianca d'Este to Galeotto della Mirandola—and priests and friars prepare to lead the Italian crusaders against the Turk. Through all the pictured pageant rides the jovial old Duke himself, gorgeously attired, serene and gracious. We see him administering justice, riding to and from his beloved hunting ground, bountifully rewarding his jester Scocola and sharing with him some merry jape, receiving a messenger from Bologna, interchanging courtesies with the Ambassador of the Most Serene Republic of Venice. The races, which the Ferrarese of that day loved no less than the Sienese now, are run before our eyes through the streets of Ferrara. Women sit at their looms, embroidering the rich designs that we may still see for ourselves in the wonderful collection that Count Gandini has presented to the Museo Civico at Modena. To the sound of lutes and viols, happy lovers gather round, kiss and embrace in the Triumph of Venus, before whom an armed warrior kneels in fetters. The whole of the “Triumph of Love,” which enters into the month of April, is like a painted page of Boccaccio, in which—it must

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be added—the note of lubricity is not altogether absent, a note that is struck, more crudely and with less artistic skill, in the whole of the upper part of the fresco for September.

Those sections only have survived that deal with the months from March to September. The first three, the best executed and best preserved, appear to be the work of Francesco del Cossa: “I am Francesco del Cossa,” he wrote to Borso, “who alone have done those three compartments towards the ante-chamber.” To him is also ascribed the most noteworthy of the subsequent scenes from the life of Borso. The rest are now assigned to Tura and his assistants.¹ Doubtless, amongst those numerous figures that surround and accompany Borso, sharing in his sports and basking in his smiles, are portraits of all the leading spirits of his Court. But all the identifications that have been suggested are little else than more or less happy conjectures, with the, perhaps solitary, exception of the handsome young man with a falcon on his wrist, riding on the Duke’s right in the month of March, who is plausibly recognized as Teofilo Calcagnino.

Towards the end of the series, in the portions not ascribed to Cossa, we begin to meet a new figure, younger and more sprightly than the Duke, clad like him in gold brocade, leading his troops and evidently drawing not a little of the popular favour and the courtly homage to himself. His features in the present state of the frescoes are unrecognizable, but it is hardly stretching a point to see in him the coming man, the “sole hope of our nation”—the “most illustrious Messere, Ercole d’Este.”

¹ For a fuller account of these remarkable frescoes and the discussion as to their authorship, see Gruyer, i. pp. 423–468, ii. pp. 575–596; F. Harck, *Gli affreschi del palazzo di Schifanoia*, translated by Venturi (Ferrara, 1886); and Venturi, *op. cit.*, pp. 722–727.

Chapter IV

THE TRIUMPH OF DUKE BORSO

IN the latter part of Borso's splendid and peaceful reign, a dark cloud began to loom upon the horizon—the grim possibility of a disputed succession and civil war, so soon as the genial old despot should be in his grave.

The Duke, who was childless, at first treated his young nephew Niccolò as though he were his own son. The youthful prince who, like his father, had studied under Guarino, grew up beautiful and gallant, as well as highly cultured. "How he is loved by his uncle Duke Borso!" wrote Caleffini.¹ The Ferrarese began definitely to look upon him as the heir to the throne. He had been knighted by the Emperor in 1452, and, a few years later, Michele Savonarola, in dedicating to him his *De vera repubblica et digna seculari militia*, hinted, not obscurely, that Niccolò would in the future have an opportunity of putting these principles of good government into practice.² At the same time there was a strong and influential party in Ferrara that had not forgotten the exiled Ercole, and clung steadfastly to the rights of the legitimate issue of the Marchese

¹ *Cronaca di Casa d'Este*, p. 289. Filissetta and Lionella, the daughters of Borso pictured for us by Girolamo Bagnolino in the sixteenth century and Mr. Maurice Hewlett in our own days, are to be taken merely as poetic inventions.

² A. Cappelli, *Niccolò di Leonello d'Este*, p. 431; Segarizzi, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

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Niccolò III. Borso, who was a conscientious soul, was probably much perplexed in his mind, how to reconcile the promise that he had made to the dying Leonello with the more obvious claims of Ercole ; it is even said that his celibacy was prompted by a desire not to add a further complication to the situation in the shape of a son of his own. "He never took a wife," writes Pope Pius II, "with the right excellent and Christian intention of leaving to the rightful heirs the sovereignty, which he had occupied in their stead while they were children."¹

Very pleasant reading is a series of letters written in the latter part of September, 1462, by Niccolò, when on a visit to his mother's family, to Borso at Ferrara. The young prince is evidently enjoying himself immensely, but he is very anxious that his uncle should not suppose that it is that which has prevented him from writing. He has just received at Gonzaga a letter from Borso, complaining that he has not heard from him since he left Ferrara ; but he assures the Duke in reply that the slackness of the messengers alone is to be blamed, not any negligence on his part, nor forgetfulness, "because of the good time that I am having here." He admits that he had not written *subito subito*, because he wanted first to have some taste of the sport prepared for him—but, as a matter of fact, the letter had been sent four days ago : "Let not your most illustrious Lordship ever believe that change of places, multiplication of pleasures, nor any imaginable delight, could equal the satisfaction that I should have in seeing your most excellent Lordship received here, as your Excellence will learn from my other letter. This illustrious lord² is

¹ *Commentarii*, ii. p. 102.

² The Marquis of Mantua, Lodovico Gonzaga.

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well, and talks of nothing else but the Duke of Modena. Here they are getting up many pleasures, here they are building, here they are preparing to receive your Excellence worthily. I am still snaring quails, although very few fat ones are to be found ; and I keep in good health, thanks be to God ! ” Then comes an account of a hawking exploit on the previous day. And more pleasures follow in the subsequent letters ; fowling and fishing excursions, a great bag of fat quails, a right good take of fine pike and other fish ; riding parties ; courtesies from the Marquis and Marchesana ; a progress through the State, ending up with a grand ceremonious entrance into Mantua. The young prince (who, from his letters, appears to be singularly young for his age—he was then twenty-four) is unaffectedly delighted at the compliments paid him ; after seeing all the sights of Mantua and waiting over a great fishing party that is to be held in his honour, he will return to his Excellence next Monday.¹

But in the meanwhile Ercole, in his banishment at Naples, was winning golden opinions from all by his gallant presence, his gracious ways and his feats of chivalry. A duel, which he fought in the royal Court with Galeazzo Pandonio da Venafro, for the love of a fair Neapolitan lady, and in which he showed the utmost magnanimity in victory, long furnished a theme for the poets and novelists of Ferrara ; as also did the courtesy and liberality with which he treated his former rival when the latter, in after years, passed through Ferrara as an exile.² After the death of King Alfonso, Ercole considered himself slighted by the

¹ Documents in Cappelli, *op. cit.*, pp. 429-430.

² Giraldi, *Ecatommiti*, vi. 1 ; Boiardo, *Pastoralia*, vi. 82-84, x. 76-80 ; Sardi, *Istorie Ferraresi*, p. 326.

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bastard Ferrante or Ferdinando, who succeeded to the Neapolitan throne, and in whose name he was governing the province of Capitanata. When Jean, son of René d'Anjou, renewed the Angevin claims upon Naples, Ercole went over to his party, and took the field against his former friend and companion. At the battle of Sarno in July, 1460, from which Ferrante fled to Naples with only twenty horsemen, Ercole is said to have personally encountered the King face to face, and to have seized and retained a portion of his royal mantle as a trophy in the attempt to make him his prisoner.¹ The Angevin triumph, however, was but temporary; Ferrante speedily recovered all that he had lost, and the Aragonese dynasty seemed once more firmly established upon the throne.

At the end of 1462 Borso recalled both his brothers from the Regno to Ferrara. To Ercole he assigned the government of the duchy of Modena; to Sigismondo that of Reggio; while he kept the nephew Niccolò by his own side at Ferrara, as chief of his privy council. This move of the Duke's excited considerable satisfaction, especially among the Modenese and Reggians, who found themselves thus provided with two small Courts of their own. Francesco di Princivalle Ariosti, who was an ardent partisan of Ercole, sent Borso a Latin elegy complimenting him on this wise division of his sovereignty, and followed it up with a letter in the same language, expressing the great gratitude of Modena and Reggio, extolling the decision taken by the Duke as something quite divine, "having followed that weighty and most praiseworthy counsel of Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses."

¹ Frizzi, iv. p. 33; Boiardo, *Pastoralia*, iv. 72-75, x. 81-90; Ariosto appears to refer to this combat, *Orlando Furioso*, iii. 47.

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Borso's answer is characteristically child-like and bland. "Our right well-beloved. We have received a letter from you in Latin, most worthy, elegant and moral ; giving us to understand what great joy and gladness it has been to those our duchies, great and small, that we have sent them our illustrious brothers to govern them, and what great thanks have been given us by all the people ; and bringing into it that memorable example of Jethro, which very fittingly indeed enters into the matter. And about that we shall say nothing further, save that, as you have done the whole to a good end and with right worthy reasons, full of charity and of very good affection, we commend you very very much for your writing and for your suggestions."¹ Clearly his Ducal Excellence was not prepared to commit himself.

It was an unequal struggle for the next few years between the two claimants. While Niccolò was more addicted to pleasure than to increasing his influence and following, Ercole grasped every opportunity to make his own position more secure. He contrived at once to make himself indispensable to Borso, and to win the complete confidence of the Venetian Republic—that formidable neighbour who, by means of her Visdomino, a kind of exalted consul whom she maintained in Ferrara to protect her commercial interests and to administer justice to her subjects there, contrived to keep in unpleasantly close touch with Ferrarese matters, and who was probably already casting envious eyes upon the Polesine of Rovigo.

Although Borso was ardently bent upon preserving and

¹ Published by Carducci, *Delle Poesie Latine di Lodovico Ariosto*, p. 231. Borso's letter is dated from Belriguardo, February 8, 1463. The scriptural reference is, of course, to the eighteenth chapter of Exodus.

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enjoying peace, he did not maintain an absolute neutrality in the politics of Italy. The accession of the Sforza to the throne of Milan, and their alliance with the Medici, had caused a new grouping among the great powers of the peninsula ; Milan, Florence and Naples now formed a triple alliance, which was to some extent counterbalanced by the rapprochement between Rome and Venice. Borso had much to hope and something to fear from the two latter powers, and his sympathies were all against the triple alliance. His relations with Naples and its new sovereign were no longer what they had been in the days of the mighty Alfonso. Nor was there much love lost between the House of Este and these comparatively upstart Medicean rulers of Florence. Borso was deeply implicated in the conspiracy of the Party of the Mountain, the adherents of the Pitti and the Neroni, against the state—perhaps even the life—of Piero de' Medici in 1466. He dispatched a strong force of horse and foot under Ercole to Fontalba, to threaten the Tuscan frontier and support the conspirators. When the plot failed, he received Diotisalvi Neroni and Giovanni Francesco Strozzi in Ferrara, and used all his influence with the Doge of Venice, Cristoforo Moro, to have the skilful old condottiere, Bartolommeo Colleoni, put at the service of the exiles. To win the Doge over to his views, Borso went incognito to Venice in April, 1467, and, in jovial wise, paid him a surprise visit, while the Serenissimo was under the hands of his barber.

War broke out before the end of the spring. The Venetian object was to crush the Medici, who were the binding link in the League of Milan and Naples, that counterbalanced their power in Italy ; Borso and Ercole chiefly desired to ingratiate themselves with the Pope, by supporting his

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allies, and thereby to win the coveted ducal crown of Ferrara. Bartolommeo Colleoni, leading the Venetian forces in his own name and not ostensibly making war as captain-general of the Republic, Ercole d'Este with Ferrarese horse and foot, together with the petty tyrants of Pesaro, Forlì and Faenza, and a number of other second-rate condottieri, advanced into the Romagna, proposing to assail Florence by way of Faenza, the Val di Lamone and the Mugello. Against them were the united forces of the Duke of Milan and King Ferrante, who were strengthened by the alliance of Giovanni Bentivoglio and Taddeo Manfredi of Imola, the whole army being under the command of Count Federigo da Montefeltro of Urbino (who was not yet Duke). The two ablest and best of the mercenary generals of Italy were thus opposed to each other, but the war was a very mean and paltry affair. The chief action of the campaign was fought at La Mulinella, near Budrio, in the plain between Bologna and Imola, on July 25, 1467. This is the engagement so derided by Machiavelli: "A regular battle, which lasted half a day, without either of the parties giving way. Nevertheless, not a single man was killed there; only there were a few horses wounded, and certain prisoners taken on either side."¹ As a matter of fact, there were several hundred men killed on one side and the other. Bartolommeo Colleoni was forced to retire, and would have suffered a complete defeat but for the valour of Ercole who, at the head of the cavalry, stayed the Venetian rout, and covered their retreat. Ercole had two horses killed under him, was severely wounded in the foot, and walked lame for the rest of his life.² Peace was

¹ *Istorie Fiorentine*, vii.

² For this "Colleonic War," cf. Armstrong, *Lorenzo de' Medici*,

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proclaimed in April, 1468, mainly through Borso's diplomacy, and Ercole, visiting Venice, had an enthusiastic reception, and probably a promise of future support in his claim to the Ferrarese crown.

Ariosto, in that scene of the *Orlando Furioso*, where Bradamante, the mythical ancestress of the House of Este, sees the long line of spirits issue from the cave of Merlin and present the forms of her descendants, refers to Ercole's heroism and the subsequent ingratitude of the Venetians :—

Ercole or vien, ch'al suo vicin rinfaccia,
Col piè mezzo arso e con quei debil passi,
Come a Budrio col petto e colla faccia
Il campo volto in fuga gli fermassi ;
Non perchè in premio poi guerra gli faccia,
Nè, per cacciarlo, fin nel Barco passi.
Questo è il Signor, di cui non so esplicarme
Se fia maggior la gloria o in pace o in arme.¹

At the beginning of 1469, the Emperor Frederick III was again in Ferrara for a few days, on his return to Germany from Rome, pouring out a profusion of diplomas, creating counts, knights, poets-laureate and doctors, literally by the score. It was a highly profitable business concern, and the amounts that he got back in fees quite refunded his royal and imperial Majesty for the costs of his journey. The Ferrarese grumbled sorely at the exorbitant sums of money demanded in payment for these luxuries by the imperial chancellor, declaring

pp. 57-71 ; Capponi, *Storia della Repubblica di Firenze*, v. cap. 4 ; Romanin, iii. pp. 326-332 ; Frizzi, iv. pp. 61, 62.

¹ " Now cometh Ercole, who casts in his neighbour's face, with his half-burnt foot and with those feeble paces, how at Budrio with breast and countenance he stayed for him his army turned in flight ; not that in reward he should then make war upon him, nor invade even the Barco to hunt him down. This is that Lord, of whom I cannot express if his glory shall be greater in peace or in arms." (iii. 46).

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that “he wanted to skin the whole lot”; and, as a matter of fact, the Emperor hurried away with a number of these newly created dignitaries in full cry after him to Venice. They had paid down their money, but got no diplomas to make good their dearly bought titles. Among those thus decorated were three brothers of the Ariosti, to whom and to their descendants the title of count was given; Francesco di Rinaldo Ariosti, seneschal to the Duke; Lodovico, an ecclesiastic, who afterwards became arch-priest of the Duomo; and a third younger brother, Niccolò Ariosti, who was destined to be the father of the great poet. Presumably, their titles were fully confirmed; but Niccolò's sons do not appear to have been styled count.

This same year was marked by the darkest, almost the only tragical event of Borso's reign. The lordship of Carpi was shared by Giovanni Lodovico Pio and his brothers, the sons of Galasso Pio and Margherita d'Este (an illegitimate daughter of Niccolò III), who were thus nephews to Borso and Ercole; and by their cousins, Leonello di Alberto Pio (the son of that Alberto Pio, whom we have met in Leonello d'Este's literary circle) and Marco di Giberto Pio. The sons of Galasso are said to have imagined themselves injured by Borso in the matter of a projected marriage between one of their sisters and the Lord of Mirandola, Galeotto Pico, to whom, as we have seen, the Duke had given his own half-sister, Bianca Maria, in the previous year. Instigated possibly by Piero de' Medici, who was desirous of avenging himself upon Borso for his support of the Florentine *fuorusciti*, and with some sort of understanding with the Duke of Milan, Giovanni Lodovico—“non pio sed impio,” says Carlo da San Giorgio, who paints him as a

¹ *Diario Ferrarese*, coll. 217, 218.

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monster of iniquity—and, perhaps, his brothers entered into a mysterious conspiracy against Borso. According to the official Ferrarese version of the affair, they intended to murder the Duke; but it seems more probable that the idea was to dethrone him and to bind Ercole, his successor according to the plan, to the party of the triple alliance. The King of Naples was more or less privy to their design. Giovanni Lodovico himself appears to have been the connecting link with Florence, while his sister Marsibilia, the wife of Taddeo Manfredi of Imola, by means of a certain Andrea da Varenzana of Faenza, secured the co-operation of the Duke of Milan.

When the preparations had been made, Giovanni Lodovico sought an interview with Ercole at Modena, and made him the most magnificent promises on the part of the allied powers. In addition to the lordship of the three duchies, he was to have Ravenna, Forlì and Faenza, as also the baton of command (with an annual provision of 50,000 ducats) of the new League which the triple alliance was preparing to succour Roberto Malatesta, the bastard of the notorious Sigismondo Malatesta, who had died in the previous year, and whose lordship of Rimini was now being claimed by Pope Paul II as a vacant fief of the Church. Ercole pretended to assent, in order to get all the evidence of the plot into his hands, but revealed the whole thing to Borso as they rode together on a hunting expedition. On July 17, Giovanni Lodovico came again to Ercole, as had been arranged, accompanied by Andrea da Varenzana and an agent of the Duke of Milan, bringing their credentials and the clauses of the treaty as he had demanded—only to find themselves taken in a trap, and arrested as they walked with him in the garden of the castle. The Milanese

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agent was released, but the other two unfortunate men were brought to Ferrara by Ercole himself, bound and surrounded with troops, with their faces hidden, and the bells of the Castello ringing, "as a sign of a rich booty." The other brothers were arrested in Carpi by the soldiery of Galeotto della Mirandola; the eldest, Giovanni Marco, was brought to Ferrara to share Giovanni Lodovico's fate, the others imprisoned elsewhere.

Giovanni Lodovico Pio and Andrea da Varenana were publicly beheaded in the piazza of Ferrara on August 12; Giovanni Marco suffered the same doom, but secretly and at night in the Castello, on September 15. The other brothers, Gian Marsilio, Gian Princivale, Manfredo, Bernardino and Tommaso, were finally brought to Ferrara and rigorously imprisoned in the Castello Vecchio; in spite of their piteous appeals for justice and protestations of innocence, they were refused a trial and even an audience of the Duke. It is highly doubtful whether they had even known of the plot; but their cousins, Leonello and Marco, who were high in Borso's favour, were persistent in their resolution to have the whole fief; and there were other greedy courtiers who expected to derive some advantage from their disgrace. Their lordship of Carpi was made over to Leonello and Marco, and their possessions in Ferrara itself were divided among Borso's favourites.¹

¹ A. Cappelli, *Congiura contro Borso d'Este*, pp. 368-374; *Diario Ferrarese*, coll. 222-225; Ugo Caleffini, *Storia di Ferrara*, ff. 49v-51; Frizzi, iv. pp. 67-69. The account of the "treason" by Carlo da San Giorgio, edited by Cappelli, is merely an official Court version of the matter, obscured by adulation and prejudice. A totally different story is told by Giraldis in the *Ecatommisti* (i. 8). He makes no mention of Piero de' Medici nor of the Pio of Carpi, but represents the whole as an attempt on the part of King Ferrante of Naples to be avenged upon Ercole for his share in the victory

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Borso had sent an account of the whole affair to the Pope, probably representing himself as threatened in this way because of his fidelity to the interests of the Church. Paul wrote back, urging the Duke to look to it that the innocent wife and children of Giovanni Lodovico should not suffer in goods or in person for Lodovico's crime.¹ Otherwise, the Pope and Cardinals applauded Borso's wisdom and prudence in the matter. But, at the Court of Naples, it was openly said that a great injustice was being done, and that Giovanni Lodovico had never plotted against Borso's state nor his person, nor in favour of Ercole, but simply desired, in understanding with the Medici, to drive out his cousins and adhere with Carpi to the League.² Jacopo Trotti, the Ferrarese orator at Rome, exhorted his master to beware of Florentine poison: "I implore your Lordship most devoutly, for God's sake, to guard your person more than you are wont, even from poisons, because the Florentines are more expert in them than any other folk that live. Take care that attention is paid even to your saddles and stirrups."³

of the Angevins at Sarno. After an ineffectual attempt to compromise Ercole with Borso, Ferrante corrupted "certain young men in the territory of Modena, who were full of daring and had been with Ercole in Naples," to slay both Borso and Ercole together, when the latter should have given Borso into their hands. Borso magnanimously pardons the conspirators, reconciles them with Ercole, and converts the King of Naples himself.

¹ Cappelli, *op. cit.*, document iii.

² Cappelli, *op. cit.*, document vi.

³ Cappelli, *op. cit.*, document iv. Trotti himself had an eye to the main chance in the ruin of the Pio. As a broad hint, he writes to Borso that he had told the Pope about the probable confiscation of their possessions, and added that, if he were near his Excellence, he too would try to get something; "Io etiam operaria li miei ferazoli per haverne la parte mia"; and that his Holiness had promised that he would take care that his being at Rome

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Such being the mutual relations of Piero de' Medici and Borso d' Este, there is somewhat remarkable reading in the consolatory letter that the latter addressed to Lorenzo de' Medici, on the occasion of Piero's death, this same December, 1469 :—

“ It would be a difficult thing for us to express with letters the great grief, the great anguish and sorrow of soul that we have conceived by the death of the magnificent and most renowned Piero, your father ; for, seeing that we were united continually by singular love, benevolence and close friendship with him (and first with the magnificent Cosimo, your grandfather, and with all the House of Medici, which bond of mutual charity had sweet and gracious beginning from our most illustrious predecessors, and has been preserved, and is preserved still better by us, their successors), not only through the great love we bear you, do we share with your Worship in the grief for the loss of so worthy and excellent a father, whose nobleness, marvellous intellect and admirable virtues certainly merited a longer life ; but also for our own sake we grieve greatly, it seeming to us that we have suffered a grievous loss of a true and excellent friend, as was your father to us, and as we were equally to him.” ¹

Such, however, was the diplomacy of the age. Each Italian prince believed that any other was capable of compassing his death, should an opportunity offer itself, while outward appearances of amity were kept up, and they wrote should not make him lose his share (*op. cit.*, document v.). Borso, however, was dissatisfied with Trotti's diplomacy, though he was *persona gratissima* with the Pope, who a few months later wrote vigorously to the Duke on his behalf (cf. Appendix II. to the present volume, document i.).

¹ Published in the *Atti e Memorie di Storia Patria per le Provincie Modenesi e Parmensi*, series i., vol. 3, p. 357.

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to each other in terms not merely of courtly politeness, but of almost fraternal affection. But, perhaps alone among the sovereigns of his day, Borso was probably happier in doing such things graciously than in meeting plots and treason by counterplots and tyranny.

In the meanwhile Ercole had taken the field again. In the August of this year, 1469, he led a Venetian force to succour the papal army under Alessandro Sforza, which Roberto Malatesta had hurled back discomfited from the walls of Rimini. His intervention had the effect which Borso and he intended, of increasing still further the debt of gratitude which the Pope owed to the House of Este.

The whole Ferrarese game was now, by 1470, in Ercole's hands. Borso had completely turned against Niccolò, who, according to the partisans of Ercole, had abandoned himself to a vicious life and proved himself incapable of governing; he kept him so short of money that the unfortunate prince had to borrow a few florins to pay the musicians of the Marquis of Mantua and of the Duke of Burgundy, who had played before him, and finally deprived him of his place of head of the privy council, installing Ercole in his stead.¹ Nevertheless, Niccolò still had partisans in Ferrara itself, and was keeping in touch with the Gonzaga at Mantua.

The old Duke was fast breaking up; but, before his death, he was to see his dearest hope fulfilled. He felt that he had done the Church some service, and was probably insistent with the Pope that this should receive the recognition he desired.² As the Easter of 1471 approached, Paul II—

¹ Cappelli, *Niccolò di Leonello d' Este*, pp. 416, 417³, *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 226.

² "The bearer of these presents, thy orator, hath set forth certain things to us faithfully in the name of thy Nobility, and albeit thy

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a sovereign pontiff after Borso's own heart, one who loved the splendid appearances of things, gorgeous ceremonies, dazzling pageants, the gleaming of jewels and rich brocades—summoned him to Rome, for the purpose of creating him Duke of Ferrara, as the Emperor had already made him Duke of Modena and Reggio.

After a solemn Mass of the Holy Spirit had been offered up in the Duomo of Ferrara, Borso set out with a magnificent train, leaving the charge of his states to Ercole, Sigismondo and Rinaldo, his brothers, to Niccolò his nephew, and to Antonio Sandeo, the Judge of the Sages. With him rode two of his brothers, Guron Maria and Alberto d' Este; Marco Pio, now as Lord of Carpi, Count Galeotto Pico della Mirandola, the young Count Niccolò da Correggio; the noble poet, Count Matteo Maria Boiardo of Scandiano; and some five hundred other gentlemen in sumptuous gala attire. Their valets wore cloth of gold; their grooms shone in brocade of silver. Trumpeters and pipers followed them, with huntsmen leading packs of splendid hounds of every kind for the chase; falconers with falcons, *girifalchi*, goshawks and kites, "that were a royal thing"; and a band of oriental keepers, dressed in doublets of brocade, were in charge of a number of "tamed and most swift leopards, a thing exceedingly wondrous."¹ A long train of mules,

devotion towards the Holy Apostolic See and the Roman Church in our person hath been for a long time not unknown to us, it was, nevertheless, most grateful to us to have understood from him that it was not merely preserved but was even waxing greater with time. He now returneth with our answer to those things that he laid before us." (Brief of Paul II to Borso, December, 1470. *Archivio Vaticano*, xxxix. 12, f. 115.)

¹ *Francisci Ariosti Peregrini Iurisconsulti, De fortunati felicisque illustrissimi Ducis Borsii in Urbem Romam ingressus Dieta, ad illustrissimum et magnanimum divum Herculem Marchionem Estensem*

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some covered with white, red and green cloths, others with crimson velvet inwrought with the ducal arms of Este in gold, carried the baggage ; troops of splendidly equipped cavalry formed the escort. The triumphal procession of the Medici which Benozzo Gozzoli had, but a few years before, frescoed upon the walls of the chapel of the Palazzo Riccardi at Florence, the painted apotheosis of the Piccolomini with which, some thirty years later, Bernardino Pintoricchio was to decorate the Library of the Duomo of Siena, will best enable us to realize to-day the superb pageant that now, in the beautiful spring weather, flashed its way through eastern Italy to the Eternal City.

But, for the old Duke, the matter was not one of pomp and ceremony alone. He ardently longed to see the holy places of Rome once more before he died, and, in all the simple fervour of his heart, he desired to receive the Blessed Sacrament from the hands of the Sovereign Pontiff.¹

Twenty days were occupied in the journey from Ferrara to Rome. At Ravenna, the ducal cortège was entertained

Libellus, f. 39. This important manuscript by Francesco Ariosti (di Princivalle), in the Biblioteca Chigiana (I. vii. 261), consists of two letters, in Latin and Italian, of April 3 and May 1, 1471, to Ercole d' Este, describing Borso's entry into Rome (*Dieta de la fortunata e felice entrata in Roma*) and his elevation to the dukedom (*Origine de la excelsa dignità del ducato de Ferrara*) respectively. He accompanied Borso and held a watching brief, so to speak, for Ercole. A shorter account by Ugo Caleffini is prefixed to the latter's *Croniche del Duca Ercole* in the British Museum codex, and is similar, but more full and extensive, to that published by Cappelli with the rhymed *Cronaca di Casa d' Este*.

¹ "In satisfaction of that long desire of ours, as thou knowest we have had, to receive so great a Sacrament from his hands," writes Borso to Giovanni di Compagno, in the letter to be presently quoted. That this devotional feeling was shared by one at least of Borso's company, we have striking evidence in Boiardo's sonnets (see chapter viii.).

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for two days at the expense of the Signoria of Venice. The Archbishop of Spalatro, general treasurer of the Church and governor of the Marches, met them at Cesena, the frontier city of the Papal States, and welcomed Borso in the name of the Pope. After two days at Cesena, they passed on to Rimini to be the guests of Roberto Malatesta, who was anxious to pay great honour to the Estensi ; two days more were spent at Pesaro, at the cost of Alessandro Sforza, who was absent at Milan ; then they went through the State of Urbino, the guests of Count Federigo, and thence by Perugia, Todi, Narni and Rignano in slow stages to Rome.¹ The last day of the journey was a veritable triumph. Prelates and barons came out to meet them at intervals on the road. When they drew near to the Ponte Milvio, the whole company was marshalled for the procession.

“ Our divine, loving and lofty lord,” writes Francesco di Princivalle Ariosti, “ rode on all joyous and jocund and lordly, resplendent with that Caesarian aspect of his, adorned with gold and gems, upon that great charger that flashed back the light, gleaming in those wondrously worked and precious trappings ; the Prince seemed rather another triumphing Caesar, than like his own Borsian serenity.” Nearest him, on either side, rode his brothers Gurone and Alberto ; close behind followed Teofilo Calcagnino, “ the ducal delight, that worthy and gentle cavalier.” Cardinal Savelli next advanced to salute them, and after him Prince Colonna with a goodly train. At the Ponte Milvio, the orators of the Most Serene Republic of Venice, Andrea Vendramin and Alvise Foscari, appeared upon the scene, with some two hundred horsemen ; “ and when they met the Ducal Excellence, they honoured him, kissed him and

¹ Ugo Caleffini, *Storia di Ferrara*, ff. 52v-54.

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embraced him, not otherwise than if he had been the father of that most sapient senate of Venice." All the way between the Ponte and the Porta del Popolo was lined with people, and the crowd was so great that it grew difficult to make any progress. Dignitary after dignitary appeared, to greet Borso as he slowly rode onwards, and to join in his triumph : Costanzo Sforza, the commander of the papal troops ; the ambassadors of all the foreign powers ; the Roman Senator in gold brocade, "as though to a triumphal Emperor of old," with a hundred "consular patricians" ; the households of the Cardinals and of Pope Paul himself. By this time, there were some eight thousand persons following the ducal pageant ; but Messer Francesco remarks with delighted wonder that, in spite of all the vast number of illustrious personages, "not even one in the least intruded or was merged into the right goodly order of our most beauteous procession, as though it would have been a sacrilege to interrupt with diverse persons so admirable a company of the splendour of princes, the preserver of peace, our divine Prince." ¹

At the Porta del Popolo seventeen cardinals were waiting, headed by the Cardinal Battista Zeno, nephew to the Pope, and the Cardinal of Mantua, Francesco Gonzaga. At the sight of these princes of the Church, all the trumpeters and musicians of the ducal train sounded a blast of exultant music. Scattering silver on all sides, Borso rode through the streets of the Eternal City, flowers showering down upon him from windows, platforms, balconies and roofs, all, high and low, welcoming the Duke "as father, as most worthy prince ; nay, as their own most worshipful

¹ *De fortunati felicisque illustrissimi Ducis Borsii ingressus Dieta*, ff. 39-41.



Duke Boreo and his companions.

By Francisco del Cero.

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Emperor.” The streets were lined with freshly planted trees, and across them, amid festoons of flowers and greenery, hung medallions with the Papal arms on one side and those of Este on the other, showing now one, now the other, as they turned round in the wind. The fountains ran with wine; everywhere were triumphal arches and music. “It was said publicly by all the Romans that never did King or Emperor enter into Rome with such great triumph and honour as this Duke.”¹ At the door of the Sacred Palace the two cardinals, Zeno and Gonzaga, took Borso between them to the Pope: “Our most mild prince, all inflamed with a zealous devotion, slowly moved towards the throne, three times with fitting reverence genuflecting, before he threw himself prostrate to earth before those holy pontifical feet.”² On the night of his arrival the weather broke up in heavy rain, the first that had fallen since his Excellence left Ferrara.

On Easter Sunday, April 14, Borso was solemnly raised to the dignity of Duke of Ferrara, with the power of disposing of the State in his will in whatever way he chose. The ceremony was carried out with every possible manifestation of honour and affection on the part of the Pope, with all the pomp and magnificence in which both Paul and Borso delighted.³ Both the chief actors—old men, broken down

¹ Caleffini, *Croniche del Duca Ercole*, f. 4.

² Francesco Ariosti, *MS. cit.*, f. 45.

³ The whole has been described in every detail by Francesco Ariosti in the second of his two letters to Ercole d'Este (in the Chigian MS. already cited), and by Borso himself in a long letter to his secretary, Giovanni di Compagno, dated April 16, 1471, prefixed in a copy by Giulio Mosti to Caleffini's *Croniche del Duca Ercole*, ff. 4v-7. The text of the latter in the British Museum MS. is fuller and better than that edited by G. Antonelli (*Lettera inedita di Borso d'Este al suo segretario Giovanni di Compagno*. Ferrara, 1869).

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in health and walking already in the shadow of the grave—entered into the spirit of the pageantry with a kind of mystical enthusiasm. “We refer all this our exaltation,” wrote the Duke, “to the most high God, to whom we pray, with all submission and reverence, that, since it hath so pleased His Majesty by means of him who holds His place on earth, He may confirm this honour of ours in Heaven, and that it may be a blessing for us and for all our subjects and peoples.”

Robed in a long gown of crimson cloth of gold, Borso carried the train of the Pope’s cope in the magnificent procession to the Basilica of San Pietro. Before Mass, while the papal choir sang the offices, the Pope dubbed Borso a knight of St. Peter and gave the blessed sword into his hands. The Despot of the Morea girded it on to the Duke’s side, while the two generals of the papal army, Napoleone Orsini and Costanzo Sforza, buckled on the golden spurs. “Gird on the sword to thy thigh, O most potent one,” sang the choir, “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; but remember that the Saints conquered kingdoms not by the sword, but by faith.” Then, while the strains of the *Kyrie Eleison* rose in petition from the choristers, the Pope approached the altar for the Mass. After the Epistle had been said in Latin and in Greek, Borso knelt again before the Pope, and took the oath of fidelity. Pope and Duke then prostrated themselves together before the altar, while the Litany of the Saints was sung—his Holiness rising in the middle to insert a novel petition of his own for the divine blessing upon the new ducal dignity.

A much shorter letter from Borso to Giovanni di Compagno is in Cappelli, *Ugo Caleffini, etc.*, pp. 307–308.

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At the Offertory, Borso first kissed the Pope's feet and hands, and then, preceded by two archbishops and followed by Alberto d' Este and Teofilo Calcagnino, embraced all the Cardinals in turn. At the Communion, he received the Blessed Sacrament from the Pope's hands, and gave him the water at the Ablutions. Then Paul invested him with the emblems of ducal dignity—a long mantle of crimson damask brocade lined with ermine, with a long train ; a great cape of ermine which covered the shoulders and arms ; “ in such wise,” writes Borso, “ that thou wouldst have thought that thou didst see a Cardinal, and we should have made thee laugh in this new dress of ours.” Then the Pope blessed the pointed ducal cap, covered with pearls, and put it upon Borso's head, gave the golden sceptre into his hands, and hung a collar of precious stones round his neck. The ceremony thus concluded, the Pope exhibited the “ Sudarium ” or “ Veronica ” to the veneration of the faithful, and, attended by Borso in his full ducal robes, imparted the Apostolic benediction to the crowd in the Piazza. The vast throng, within and without the Basilica, rivalled that of a Jubilee, and many people were crushed to death. All the Sacred College, at the Pope's orders, escorted Borso back in triumph to the palace in the Piazza Venezia, while louder and louder arose the acclaiming shouts of the Roman crowd : “ Duca, Duca ! Borso, Borso ! Evviva il Duca Borso ! ”

On the following morning, the Pope, “ imitating the customs of eternal God, who giveth all things most abundantly,” summoned Borso to his presence again, to confer upon him the Golden Rose. Borso attended the Mass in San Pietro, which was sung by the Cardinal of Pavia, in his full ducal robes, sitting between the two papal

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nephews, the Cardinals Zeno (of Santa Maria in Portico) and Marco Barbo :—

“ When the Mass was finished and the benediction had been given in the usual way, our Lord sat down and made a fine sermon, and a long and goodly oration, in which he explained to what end the Church had invented this festivity of the Rose, and what it signified, and how it was given to one most worthy prince of this world for a similitude, to exalt every man to the desire of eternal good things, to which we all who are in this life should tend, like men, truly elect and champions, making every resistance to the things that are of the devil and contrary to the will of God. And here, right well to the point, speaking right kindly, he graciously magnified greatly both us and our House, commemorating some excellent benefits done by our House for Holy Church (albeit we could have reminded him of others), and showing clearly how we were worthy of this gift of the Rose for many reasons, which we shall pass over, and that, as we have been good up to now, so should we continue even to the end, to be hereafter crowned in our celestial country. This prayer being ended, most devoutly and with great elegance and very greatly in commendation of us, the Lord Cardinal who was on the left of his Beatitude went down to the altar to take the Rose in his hand to bring it into his sight ; and at the summons we went to kneel at his holy feet, accompanied by the Cardinal of Montferrat and him of Santa Maria in Portico ; and while we were on our knees, his Holiness gave us the Golden Rose ; which, we would have thee know, has been more worthily adorned than it has ever been before : and all this for our glory.”¹

¹ Borso's letter to Giovanni di Compagno, *MS. cit.*, f. 6v.

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At the door of San Pietro, Paul once more gave the Rose into Borso's hands, so that the people might see; after which, attended by all the Cardinals and carrying the Rose in his hand, Borso rode in triumph through the streets to the papal palace of San Marco, tired out in body, but in a great state of mental exaltation.

In fact, beneath all this pomp, there was a serious and noble design on foot. The Pope had conceived a great idea of the renovation of the Church, and Borso seemed to him the very man among the secular princes of Italy to serve his need. He remained with his company for a month in the Eternal City, splendidly entertained by the Pope, and "so gladly welcomed by the Romans that it seemed that God had gone to Rome."¹ He was closeted for many hours in secret consultation with the Sovereign Pontiff, and openly expressed his hope of bringing the latter back with him to Ferrara. The subject of these prolonged discussions excited much curiosity among the Cardinals, and they were generally thought to refer to the future summoning of a Council at Ferrara itself.² Soon after the beginning of May, Borso left Rome, travelling through the territory of the Church to visit the Holy House of Loreto. On May 18 he entered Ferrara, with Ercole—who had come out to meet him—riding by his side.

Borso returned to his capital with the long-sought title of Duke of Ferrara and with the power of disposing of his duchy as he would, but utterly broken down in health. At his very entrance to the city, he refused the triumph that the people had prepared, because he felt himself unable to bear it. The annual race in honour of St. George had

¹ Caleffini, *Storia di Ferrara*, f. 54 v.

² Cf. Pastor, ii. p. 392 and document 100.

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been postponed for him and his Court, and was run on May 26; but, on the next day, the Duke was seriously ill.¹ It was whispered that both he and the Pope, who showed similar symptoms, had been poisoned.

While he lay, apparently on his death-bed at Belfiore, civil war burst out in the peaceful city of Ferrara. Ercole assembled the Diamanteschi in Castello Novo, the fortress which then commanded the southern portions of the city, and appealed to Venice; Niccolò occupied the Castello Vecchio with his Veleschi, and appealed to Mantua and Milan. There was a desperate battle in the streets, in which the followers of Ercole were the aggressors and drove back their adversaries with heavy loss. An envoy from Bologna, who, after delivering his embassy to Borso, had attempted to mediate between Ercole and Niccolò, was murdered in the streets—it was said at Ercole's instigation.² The Marquis of Mantua sent his troops to the frontier, under the command of his son, Federigo, in support of Niccolò, and the Duke of Milan assembled a strong force of horse and foot in the district of Parma; but they were checked by the prompt action of the Venetians, who advanced upon the Polesine of Rovigo, while their ships—two galleons and five galleys—appeared upon the Po and moved up towards Ferrara, with orders to obey Borso, if he lived, and, if he died, to declare for Ercole.³

But a sudden rallying on the part of Borso dispelled the tempest. Carried into Castello Vecchio from Belfiore, he ordered Niccolò instantly to retire to Mantua, and Ercole to return to his government at Modena. Niccolò obeyed,

¹ Caleffini, *op. cit.*, f. 55; *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 229.

² *Cronaca di Bologna*, col. 387 (*Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, xviii.).

³ Cappelli, *Niccolò di Leonello d' Este*, p. 419; *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 229; Caleffini, *Croniche del Duca Ercole*, f. 8.

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and left Ferrara on July 23, hastening to find the Marquis of Mantua and the Duke of Milan, who were together at Gonzaga and were profuse in their promises of assistance.¹ Ercole made a show of compliance, but soon returned and prepared the situation for taking possession of the State. On July 25 Pope Paul died, almost with his last breath inquiring anxiously after the health of his beloved Duke Borso.² The amelioration in the Duke's condition was only temporary. On August 5, Giovanni Stagnasio, the Florentine agent in Ferrara, wrote to Lorenzo de' Medici that Borso was dying in great suffering, and that Ercole would inevitably succeed. All his brothers, the majority of the nobles, almost the whole people both of the city and contado, were strongly on his side, and any opposition would be ineffectual against the will and power of the Venetians. All the fortresses were in the hands of his adherents, the Castello Vecchio and Castello Novo were held in force and armed with artillery, soldiers were being enrolled every day, and not the slightest chance remained for Niccolò.³

Borso died on August 19 in the Castello Vecchio; his half-brother Alberto watched over him till the end, and then hastened to inform Ercole in Castello Novo. Ercole kept the news secret until all his preparations were made, and summoned the Venetian ships, which arrived in the vicinity the next day, simultaneously with the meeting of the representatives of the people under the presidency of the Judge of the Sages, Antonio Sandeo, in the Palazzo della Ragione, to elect him Duke. As soon as Sandeo had

¹ Schivenoglia, *Cronaca di Mantova*, p. 166.

² See Pastor, ii. p. 394, and Appendix II. to present volume, document 2.

³ Dispatch in Cappelli, *op. cit.*, p. 435.

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communicated the result of the meeting to him, Ercole vested himself in the ducal robes that the Pope had given to Borso, with the cap on his head, the blessed sword by his side, and the golden spurs at his heels, and the golden sceptre in his hand. Thus attired, mounted upon a white horse, with all the members of the House of Este, with the ducal household, all bearing little banners with the crest of the *diamante* upon them, attended by several thousand armed mercenaries, Ercole rode through the streets of Ferrara to the Duomo. There, before the high altar, into the hands of Antonio Sandeo, he solemnly swore to maintain justice to the people of Ferrara.¹ Then, as "Duke of Ferrara, Modena, and Reggio, Marquis of Este, and Count of Rovigo," he announced, as though it had taken place that same day, to Lorenzo de' Medici, that Borso had died and that he had been chosen to succeed him. "May God have received his blessed and innocent soul, and placed it in Paradise. This our most faithful community and all the other peoples of our most illustrious House have unanimously elected me for their prince and lord, and given me the sceptre of the government. For which we thank and magnify the eternal and glorious God."²

Borso's state funeral took place on the 22nd. He was laid to rest, not with the other members of his House, but in his own special foundation of the Certosa of San Cristoforo. In that most restful and peaceful of Italian burial-grounds—at the end of one of those long, harmoniously silent ways between inclosed and fragrant gardens on either side, so characteristic of Ferrara to-day—the tomb of the "divine Borso" is still shown, while you shall seek

¹ Caleffini, *Croniche del Duca Ercole*, f. 8; *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 230.

² Letter of August 20, 1471. In Cappelli, *op. cit.*, p. 436.

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elsewhere for those of the other sovereigns of his House in vain.

As the new Duke, with all his Court and a long array of poor mourners of both sexes, clad in black at his expense, followed the body in procession from the Castello Vecchio down the Via degli Angeli, the whole way was lined with the ducal mercenaries, while six hundred arquebusiers and four hundred foot-soldiers followed to guard the new sovereign—such was still the dread that he had of the fugitive Niccolò. Tito di Novello, Bishop of Adria, preached the funeral oration in the church, and, when they returned from the function, Lodovico Carbone mounted a pulpit at the entrance of the palace, and, in presence of the Duke and the people, uttered an eloquent panegyric of the dead sovereign. “It seemed,” writes the chronicler, “that our Saviour God had died a second time.”¹

¹ Caleffini, *Croniche del Duca Ercole*, f. 8v; *Storia di Ferrara*, f. 55v *Diario Ferrarese*, coll. 231, 232, where something has clearly been borrowed from Caleffini.

Chapter V

UNDER THE SCEPTRE OF ALCIDES

ERCOLE D'ESTE was two months under forty when he ascended the ducal throne of Ferrara and Modena. He was a tall man, handsome in a somewhat forbidding fashion, with harsh, strongly marked aquiline features and swarthy complexion, and with something subtle and inscrutable in his expression. In his portrait at Ferrara, possibly a copy after some [lost reconstruction of his personality by Dosso Dossi, he is in armour wearing a cap, one hand resting on a helmet, the other on the hilt of his sword, and has an air of firm and unswerving resolution—which the facts of his life altogether disprove. The admirable picture at Modena, ascribed to Dosso Dossi and reproduced in the present work, shows how much he softened down in later years. Here he is seen, still partly in armour, wearing a black velvet bonnet with a medallion of St. Roch, leaning one arm upon a parapet—a striking study of an Italian despot of the Renaissance.¹ In early manhood Ercole had acquired a considerable reputation for personal valour, with which his after life hardly corresponded; although possessed of many admirable, even

¹ Chronological considerations make it improbable that Ercole ever sat to Dosso Dossi. If this portrait is really by him, it is probably worked up from earlier materials after Ercole's death.

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noble qualities, he was not as Duke conspicuous for either moral or physical courage. He sincerely loved his people. There can be no doubt that his elevation to the throne was exceedingly welcome to the vast majority of his subjects, and, throughout his long reign, he appears to have retained their affection to the last. Less genial and more unscrupulous, more ruthless by nature than Borso, with a trace of the characteristic Estensian sensuality and cruelty, he had something of his brother's passion for display and magnificence. Like Borso, he was a lover of peace, an enthusiast for vernacular poetry, for drama and romance, a patron of the arts. He was exact and scrupulous in his religious observances, and his devotion grew upon him, tempering and eliminating the uglier features in his character, until the end of his days.

And, indeed, at the very outset of his reign a peculiar mystical note was struck, and his admirers declared that Heaven itself had intervened to secure his peaceful accession to the throne. While Borso lay on his death-bed, and men's minds were filled with apprehension for the future, before the expulsion of Niccolò di Leonello from the city, a picture of the Madonna and Child—which a certain Niccolò Calavrese had put up over a passage near the stables of the Corte Vecchia, which was used for immoral purposes by the servants of the Court, “in order that the dishonest and shameless might be put to the blush and abstain from committing their iniquities”—began to work miracles. “Lo,” writes Francesco di Princivalle Ariosti, “our most revered Lady, the Mother of our Saviour Messer Jesu, moved by a heartfelt pity towards our most flowering country and towards the constant Herculean justice, deigned to elect this most humble seat, within this city of Ferrara,

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within this magnificent ducal palace, and in the most humble and abject part of it, for the sacristy of her immense clemency." This, the pious courtier assures us, was permitted by the Divine Providence "for the illumination and instruction of her devout and pious Messer Ercole," to give him confidence in coming into his own under Our Lady's patronage. She had been moved and inclined to descend into this shrine in the palace, "for no other reason than more securely to protect her most devoted and divine Lord Ercole and the right splendid city of Ferrara and all the lordly barons of the most illustrious House of Este, and to quiet henceforth the minds of the people, who were easily stirred up and divided in their wills. For, in sooth, in that time not seldom did there seem fear of a war worse than civil, in which would be such copious shedding of blood as oft doth befall in cities and kingdoms when they are in doubt as to who should succeed in their dominion."¹

Great confidence had the new Duke of Ferrara in the protection of his celestial Patroness—and he trusted a little likewise in the assassin's dagger and the poisoned cup, no less than in the axe of the headsman.

He began his reign by showering favours upon all those who had been assiduous on his behalf, or had been noted for their fidelity to Borso; his half-brother Alberto and Borso's favourite, Teofilo Calcagnino, were specially honoured, the latter being made his companion and con-

¹ *La Origine et el Sito del novo Sacello dedicato ad honore e per reverentia de la gloriosissima Vergene, Madre de Jesu Cristo Salvatore nostro, intro el magno e magnifico Pallazo Ducale de Ferrara.* This very curious treatise, which is dated April 22, 1476, was originally dedicated to Pope Sixtus IV. Like Francesco Ariosti's work already quoted on Borso's Roman Triumph, it is written both in Latin and in Italian. The only existing manuscript (Biblioteca Estense, cod. a, w. 4, 4) is the copy presented by the author to Leonora of Aragon.

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firmed in all the dignities and emoluments that he had enjoyed under Borso. As to Francesco d'Este, Leonello's bastard, who had appeared again in Ferrara, he was given a pension and sent back to Burgundy. In September a general pardon was proclaimed to all Niccolò's adherents who should avail themselves of it within a month, should return to Ferrara and acknowledge Ercole. The property of the contumacious was to be confiscated, and they themselves banished for ever on pain of death, fathers being held answerable for the loyalty of sons. In October another month's grace was given. But there were many executions for treason; at the end of November and the beginning of December, plots were discovered to betray the frontier fortresses of San Felice and Finale, and Stellata di Ficarolo, to Niccolò, and the inculpated parties were hanged, or beheaded and quartered, in the Piazza. And in the meanwhile Niccolò himself was at Mantua, supported by his uncle, the Marchese Lodovico Gonzaga, and writing piteous appeals to Lorenzo de' Medici and the Pope, styling himself "Duke, Marquis, and Count." He is said to have plotted to take Ercole's life by poison—though that may have been a mere invention on the part of his enemies to palliate what followed.

We have already met Count Niccolò di Rinaldo Ariosti, seneschal to Duke Borso, who was now in equally high favour with Borso's successor. Early in December, Ercole sent him to Mantua, ostensibly to bring a present to the Marchesana, in reality to procure the removal of Niccolò by poison. By the promise on the part of the Duke of two castles, a palace in Ferrara and an annuity, the Count seduced Niccolò's seneschal, a certain Cesare Pironi of Mantua, and prevailed upon him to undertake the

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business, giving him a poisoned dagger and, in case he should lack courage to use it, a deadly venom to mix with the intended victim's food. But as the hour of the supper approached, on the evening of December 8, a sudden dizziness with violent colic seized upon the wretched seneschal and, thinking that he had accidentally poisoned himself and that he was dying, he confessed the whole thing to Niccolò and to Federigo Gonzaga. Niccolò Ariosti saved himself by flight, while the treacherous Cesare and his accomplice were publicly executed in the market-place of Mantua.

Niccolò d' Este at once wrote to Lorenzo de' Medici, complaining bitterly that "Messer Ercole has not been content with having occupied my State by deceiving Duke Borso, but has also wickedly tried and schemed to have my life taken away by poison." Not to let his uncle monopolise all the claim to celestial favours, he ascribes his escape to the intervention of God and the Blessed Virgin on the feast of her Immaculate Conception, and appeals to Lorenzo to use his influence on his behalf at the Papal Court, where he fondly imagines that the question of his investiture with the duchy of Ferrara is being considered. "I pray your Magnificence, by the right of friendship, to recommend me to his most reverend Lordship, the Cardinal degli Orsini, in order that my cause may not be lost through not having any one to favour the justice of my claim, which is known to every reasonable man. I shall be infinitely obliged to your Magnificence, and if ever I have my State and good fortune, as I hope in God, you will be able to make use of me and all my means as though they were yours, not less than if we were carnal brothers."¹

¹ Letter of Niccolò d' Este to Lorenzo de' Medici, December 16, 1471, in Cappelli, *Niccolò di Leonello d' Este*, pp. 436, 437.

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But neither Lorenzo de' Medici nor the new Pope Sixtus had any intention of backing this hopelessly lost cause. In reward probably for his dubious services, Count Niccolò Ariosti was appointed governor of the citadel of Reggio ; it was while he held this office that his eldest son, the future glory of Ferrara and Italy, was born in 1474, and christened Lodovico.

In Ferrara itself there had been great doings since Ercole's succession, and the new Duke seemed to be striving to rival in splendour his brother Borso's age of gold. Building, decorating, paving went on within the city in every direction, while outside the walls on the north a magnificent park, the Barco, was constructed round the summer-palace of Belfiore, partly a delightful garden with fruit trees and shady groves, partly an artificial forest and hunting ground with hills, fish-ponds, and woods stocked with every kind of game. Its wild boars and its peacocks were specially famous.¹ The same generous patronage was extended to artists and men of letters as in the days of Leonello and Borso. The University was again reorganized and the chairs generously endowed ; in fact, at this time there were more professors and lecturers at the Studio of Ferrara than in the present year of grace there are students. In the first year of Ercole's reign, printing was introduced into Ferrara ; at first, however, the Court made little use of it, and the scribes and copyists continued to reap a rich harvest. The splendid library of the palace was augmented,

¹ It will be remembered that Belfiore was not included within the walls of the city until the building of the new part of the town, the Herculean addition, at the end of the fifteenth century. The site of Belfiore has, at least, escaped the degradation of being built over. See Filippo Borgatti's map of old Ferrara in Solerti, *Ferrara e la Corte Estense*.

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more thoroughly arranged, and, a little later, placed under the charge of the learned and pompous Pellegrino Prisciano, who must rank as one of the great Italian librarians of the early Renaissance. With the utmost liberality, these treasures were placed at the disposal of the courtiers and others, and the ducal library continued to be a fountain-head of culture for all the State.¹

Magnificent pageants accompanied the state visit of Ercole to Venice in February, 1472, as soon as he found himself firmly seated on the throne, and even more sumptuous festivities welcomed the return to Ferrara in June of the Duke's mother, Madonna Ricciarda, after her twenty-eight years of voluntary exile at Saluzzo. Her stepson Rinaldo was sent to bring her from Casale di Monferrato, Sigismondo and Alberto welcomed her at the frontier, and the Duke himself with all his Court came up the Po to meet her at Vigarano. On the day of her home-coming, the law-courts and all the shops were closed; five hundred Ferrarese ladies waited to receive her on the river banks, and with bursts of music, firing of guns, clanging of bells, with a great company of Piedmontese and Ferrarese nobles riding together, she was brought to the ducal palace opposite the Duomo, where, as Melissa foretells to Bradamante, she had for all her sorrows and vicissitudes of fortune an *amplo ristoro*. "If ever honour was paid to any person," says the Ferrarese Diarist, "think that our Lord Duke paid it to his mother."²

Henceforth every year on August 20, the anniversary of

¹ See Bertoni, *La Biblioteca Estense*, cap. ii. and iii. *passim*.

² *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 241. Cf. *Orlando Furioso*, xiii. 67. Belfiore was given to her for residence, where she died in August, 1474. She was buried with her husband in S. Maria degli Angeli.

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the accession of Ercole, a solemn Mass of the Holy Spirit was sung by the clergy of Ferrara in the presence of the Court ; there was a public procession, as on the Feast of the Corpus Domini, in which all the members of the House of Este walked, dressed in cloth of gold. Cannons thundered across the Piazza, bells rang out, all the shops and manufactories in the city were closed as though it had been Sunday. Other picturesque customs were introduced. At the beginning of the year, the Duke himself with his brothers and many of the nobles went in open carriages or on horseback through the city with trumpeters, pipers and singers, *cercando la sua ventura*, that is, knocking at the doors, asking for presents of food and other things, which were partly employed in an improvised banquet, partly given to the poor. The first time that this was done, in January, 1473, a terrible storm of snow and wind accompanied the merry-makers, whose visits were unexpected, as nothing of the kind had been done in the days of Borso. "He would have had much more, if the people had known that he was coming, and if the weather had been good, so that they could have gone to the villas to fetch things to give him and to do him honour. But suffice it to say that his Excellence was welcomed as gladly as tongue can tell." The ducal "fortune-seekers" began with Madonna Anna de' Roberti, Rinaldo's mother, and then visited high and low throughout the city, ending up with the Bishop of Ferrara, Lorenzo Roverella, who gave a horse worth one hundred and fifty ducats, and came back with them to supper.¹

¹ *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 243 ; Ugo Caleffini, *Croniche del Duca Ercole*, ff. 13-15. Caleffini gives a long list of all that the Duke was given : " For I know, since I was there in person, writing it all down."

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On other days the Duke gave a state banquet and a dance to all the chief ladies of Ferrara, "marriageable girls and young married ladies of Ferrara fit for dancing," as the Diarist puts it, in the palace; in spite of his lameness, his Excellence himself, "robed in a gown of black silk lined with ermine, with a collar round his neck worth fifty thousand ducats," opened the ball with the wife of one of the nobles, while Sigismondo, Rinaldo, and Alberto, his brothers, Teofilo Calcagnino, "his companion," Borso of Correggio (first cousin to Niccolò) and the rest did their duty manfully. The carnival of 1473 was unusually sumptuous; it was anticipated and prolonged from the beginning of January to the end of March, in honour of the Duke's approaching marriage. Masquerades filled Ferrara and its suburbs, night after night. Princes of the reigning House, nobles of the Court, private citizens vied with each other in hospitality and display, the whole thing being crowned by a great masked ball in the ducal palace on the last day of the carnival, when all the lords of the House of Este appeared in masquerade.¹ Even during Lent they managed to keep it up. On March 25 Rinaldo's bride, Maria Lucrezia of Montferrat, came to Ferrara along the Po, was met by the Duke and rode through the

The list occupies five pages, three columns to a page, in the British Museum manuscript. Capons and cheeses, "forme di formazo," appear to have been the most usual offerings; but some gave veal, pheasants, partridges and other birds, even peacocks, and also pigs. A poor priest, the "capellano de Santa Maria Nova," gave four white torches. A Hebrew money-lender, Salomone, was liberal with little tarts and candles.

¹ All these details from the *Diario Ferrarese*, coll. 242-246. It should be remembered that these festivities at this time were held, not in the Castello Vecchio, but in the present Palace of the Municipio, opposite the Duomo. There was a great banqueting hall that looked out to the east upon the Piazza and to the north upon the Castello.

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streets by his side to the Palazzo del Paradiso (now the University), which had been confiscated from the Pio by Borso. "And along all the way by which she rode, there were so many people to see her, right up to the Paradiso, and so many ladies at the windows, that it was a wonder, as she rode on to the sound of trumpets, of pipes and of guns, and the ringing of bells."¹ On May 1, the Duke and his favourites used to ride together through the city, carrying bouquets of spring flowers—bringing the May, it was called—in their hands.

Unfortunately, there was a darker side to all this festivity and display, and some at least of it must be laid to the Duke's account. During these first years of Ercole's reign, the Po rose and flooded the country; there was much disease and scarcity of the bare necessities of life among the poorer classes. Nevertheless, in order that his triumphs and his receptions of distinguished foreigners might pass off well and with honour, the Duke was peremptory and insistent with his *fattori generali* that they should find him the sums of money he needed; you must obey, he wrote on one occasion, "even if you have to pledge all that you have in the world." The citizens in consequence were taxed heavily, and had to have recourse to the Jews, the rate of usury being very high.² To make things worse, he was careless about the character of the officials that he employed; many of them oppressed and harassed the people to make a purse for themselves.

Most hated and corrupt of these was Bonvicino dalle Carte, one of the *fattori generali*; much beloved and favoured by Borso, this man—originally a Milanese

¹ *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 247.

² A. Venturi, *L'Arte Ferrarese nel periodo di Ercole I*, i. pp. 92-95.

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comber of wool—by malversation and extortion had amassed a fortune of thirty thousand ducats. One of his sons had married a daughter of Cammilla dalla Tavola, a half-sister on the mother's side of Alberto and Gurone d' Este. In August, 1475, Ercole found him out. Some mercy was shown him, because he was ready to betray his accomplices ; but he was sentenced to pay an enormous fine to the Duke and expelled from Ferrara. All his goods were confiscated, and every member of his family hunted out of their home. The mob was suffered to sack his house, while a private citizen paid the priests of the Duomo to ring their bells all that day and night, and made a great bonfire in front of the Castello Vecchio. "Not for two hundred years had the people of Ferrara received better news nor greater joy." The man's wife, Giovanna Ariosti, died of grief. Nevertheless, subsequent events showed that Ercole profited but little from the lesson. Another official of the same type, who added hypocrisy to his attainments, was Frate Guglielmo, a Piedmontese friar who had been Borso's confessor. He made use of his post of Rector of the Spedale di Santa Anna, to extort money from the patients. Him, too, Ercole sent about his business, and put men of virtuous life in his stead.²

Meanwhile in Rome, the General of the Friars Minor, Francesco della Rovere, had succeeded to Paul II under the title of Sixtus IV, a Genoese thus replacing a Venetian upon the throne of the Fisherman. Modern research has cleared the memory of Sixtus from the foulest imputations that have stained his memory, at least so far as his personal morality is concerned. Not so, however, from the political

¹ Caleffini, *Croniche del Duca Ercole*, ff. 22v-23v.

² Caleffini, *MS. cit.*, f. 24.

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aspect. The builder of the Cappella Sistina, the patron of the Vatican Library, has immense claims upon the gratitude of posterity. But, in Melozzo da Forlì's noble fresco, while Platina kneels at his feet, we see the Pope surrounded by a sinister group of nephews. Pietro Riario, indeed, the Cardinal of San Sisto, from whom the Church and Italy will mercifully be delivered before he reach his thirtieth year—"his right worthy nephew," to whom the Pope will raise the monument designed by Mino da Fiesole, that still adorns the choir of the church of the Santi Apostoli in Rome—is not present. At the Pope's right hand stand two young prelates: Raffaello Sansoni, the son of a niece, Violante Riario; Giuliano della Rovere, a brother's son: Cardinals of San Giorgio and San Pietro in Vincoli respectively. Further away stand two laymen: Count Girolamo Riario, the son of the Pope's sister; Giovanni della Rovere, brother to the Cardinal Giuliano, destined to be the father of Francesco Maria, the third Duke of Urbino.¹ The painter's insight has let us clearly see who is the coming man of the group—that dark, forbidding Giuliano, who, some thirty years later, will continue the work of dragging the Chariot of the Bride of Christ out of the right track. But the old man's favourite is the taller of the two laymen, the Count Girolamo, who is to be the guiding spirit, the evil genius of this pontificate. To build up dominions and lordships for him, Sixtus will keep all Italy in a turmoil, with secret conspiracies and open wars:

Hitherto, however, Sixtus and Ercole had kept on good terms. The Pope had refused to recognize Niccolò's claims, and in September, 1472, he had renewed the investiture of Ferrara and the other places held from the Church in

¹ Cf. A. Schmarsow, *Melozzo da Forlì*, pp. 42, 43.

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Romagna to Ercole and his heirs, and acknowledged his ducal title.

The time had come for the Duke's marriage with the Princess Leonora of Aragon, the eldest daughter of his former foe, King Ferrante of Naples. As the King was the leading spirit in the Triple Alliance, it will be seen that by this marriage Ercole was turning his back upon the foreign policy of Borso, and running the risk of future complications with his formidable neighbours, Venice and Rome. At present, however, neither the Most Serene Republic nor the Sovereign Pontiff raised any objection to the match.

A little collection of courtly and dignified love-letters is still preserved in the Archivio di Stato at Modena, written by Ercole in his own hand to Leonora—*illustrissima amatissima mia consorte*, as he calls her, in anticipation of her coming. They are mere formal courtesies for the most part. In one he thanks her for her letters and gracious little gifts, "*le cose gentile che La me ha mandato*"; in another, with what seems a genuine touch of passion, he says: "One hour seems to me a thousand years before your Ladyship is here."¹

In April a noble company of gentlemen left Ferrara to bring Leonora to her bridegroom. The progress of the bridal train up through Italy from Naples to Ferrara was one continuous triumph. The countrymen of the bridegroom were represented by his brothers, Sigismondo (who had acted as his procurator) and Alberto d' Este, by Galeotto Pico and Marco Pio, the Lords of Mirandola and Carpi, each of these two with twenty-four horsemen, by Borso of Correggio, Matteo Maria Boiardo, Niccolò de'

¹ Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*, letters of January 27, March 4, March 27, April 10, 1473.

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Contrari of Ferrara, Niccolò Rangoni of Modena, Teofilo Calcagnino, each with ten horsemen, and a number of lesser nobles, amongst whom were Tito Strozzi and Galasso Ariosti (a cousin of our Count Niccolò). A splendid company of Neapolitans rode with them headed by the Dukes of Atri and Amalfi, with many of the noblest ladies of the Kingdom. At Rome especially, Leonora was received with *stupendissimo onore*, as Corio puts it, by Pope Sixtus IV and the two Cardinal nephews, Pietro Riario and Giuliano della Rovere. Preceded by troops of trumpeters, pipers and drummers, followed by the nobles of Ferrara and Naples, the households of the Cardinals and many Roman gentlemen, amidst the triumphant acclamations of the delighted Romans, Leonora rode through the streets of the Eternal City, between the two young Cardinals; “dressed all in black velvet, adorned in front with infinite pearls and jewels, with a cape and a little black hat with white feathers, between those two prelates she seemed a thing divine.”¹

In the Piazza de’ Santi Apostoli, Pietro Riario had erected a temporary palace, “adorned not less than if Saint Peter himself had come down from Heaven to earth.” The amazing lavishness of its furniture and upholstery, the exquisite tapestries, the gold and silver vessels made an immense sensation, and were held to mark the culminating point of extravagant display of the century. It was the vigil of Pentecost, June 5, and here the Duchess and her train were lodged. The next day Leonora, dressed in gold brocade, flashing with jewels and gems, was taken by

¹ Corio, *Storia di Milano*, iii. pp. 266, 267. For the whole subject of the marriage, cf. L. Olivi, *Delle Nozze di Ercole I d’Este con Eleonora d’Aragona*.

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the two Cardinals to the Vatican, to assist at the Pope's Mass and have an audience of the Holy Father. She won all hearts by her wisdom and her gracious conversation ; "Tully himself," said the Cardinals, "would lose in eloquence by comparison with her." Afterwards they brought her back again to witness the performance of the story of Susanna by a Florentine company. The next day, Whit Monday, a sumptuous banquet was given in her honour by the splendour-loving Pietro Riario, in the fairy palace that was to vanish like a dream on her departure ; the amazing menu may be read at length in Corio's history, but to the modern mind its most taking feature was the mythological scenes set forth upon the tables in shapes of pastry, life-sized. There was the story of Atalanta, the liberation of Andromeda, the chariot of Ceres, the labours of Hercules, the triumph of Venus, and many other ingenious devices of the same kind—all, of course, accompanied by Latin poetry in honour of the new Alcides and his divine Parthenopeian bride. At the end of the banquet there was a dance of the sixteen great lovers, men and women, of the olden times ; the fierce Centaurs rushed in to carry off the nymphs, but were routed and driven away by Hercules, after which "there was the representation of Bacchus and Ariadne, with many other most beautiful things, of very great and inestimable expense."¹

The splendid company entered Florence on the morning of June 22, having spent the previous night at San Casciano. They rode through the Porta Romana across the Ponte Vecchio to the Palazzo della Signoria, where the Priors were waiting for them on the Ringhiera, and an expectant crowd

¹ Corio, iii. pp. 267-275 ; C. Corvisieri, *Il Trionfo Romano di Eleonora d'Aragona* ; Pastor, ii. pp. 430-433.

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thronged the Piazza ; without dismounting, Leonora rode up to the platform near Donatello's Marzocco and made a little speech to the magistrates of the Republic, to which the Gonfaloniere made a suitable reply. Then, without stopping, she went on to the Medicean palace in the Via Larga, where apartments had been provided for her ; Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici themselves waited upon her at table, and made her welcome in every possible way. The feast of the Nativity of the Baptist was kept in Florence, with religious pageants and races. Throughout their stay and passage through the territory of the Florentines, the Duchess and all her company—some 1,400 persons in all—were the guests of the Republic. “ It was said that about ten thousand florins were spent in honouring her,” grumbles a Florentine contemporary, “ which was a bad and useless extravagance.”¹

At last, on July 3, Leonora approached Ferrara. The Duke and his nobles met her at the frontier and brought her by water along the Po di Primaro to San Giorgio, the banks all lined with country people in gala attire to welcome their first Duchess with dancing and music. She rode into the city dressed in cloth of gold, her hair flowing freely and royally crowned, under a rich baldacchino, through a long avenue of green trees, freshly planted for the occasion. Bands of boys dressed as the days of the year came to meet her, troops of masqueraders representing the seven planets danced before her. They were married in the Duomo next day by the Cardinal of Ravenna, Bartolommeo Roverella, Lorenzo's brother, and eight days of public holiday and

¹ Quoted by I. Del Lungo, *Prose volgari etc. di Angelo Ambrogini Poliziano*, pp. 240, 241 (*note*). Leonora's visit to Florence is mentioned by Poliziano in his elegy *In Albieram Albitiam*, lines 59–68.

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festivities followed, with balls, tournaments and sport of all kinds. In the ducal palace, "the Excellence of the Bride danced, with her black hair, according to the usage of Naples, flowing down her shoulders and a crown on her head like a Queen."¹ And the Ferrarese were not disappointed in their magnificent, dark queenly Duchess; Leonora was as brave and virtuous as she was beautiful and talented. Sings our Messer Lodovico:—

De l' alta stirpe d' Aragona antica
Non tacerò la splendida Regina,
Di cui nè saggia sì, nè sì pudica
Veggio istoria lodar Greca o Latina,
Nè a cui Fortuna più si mostri amica;
Poi che sarà da la Bontà divina
Eletta madre a partorir la bella
Progenie, Alfonso, Ippolito e Isabella.²

On May 18, 1474, Leonora gave birth to a daughter, Isabella—that Isabella in whom we now recognize the ideal woman of the Italian Renaissance. She was not, however, Ercole's eldest child; he had already had an illegitimate daughter, Lucrezia, by a certain Lodovica Cantelmiere or Condolmieri, born shortly before his accession to the throne.

The Duchess had made a vow to the miraculous Madonna

¹ Caleffini, *MS. cit.*, ff. 16v, 17; *Diario Ferrarese*, coll. 248, 249. "She surpasses the cherubim in beauty," sang Gian Marsilio Pio from his dungeon; "never was there seen a more pitiful lady; I hope she will draw me out of this castle" (Bertoni, *op. cit.*, p. 146). In the previous year, the five captive Pio had escaped, but Gian Marsilio, Bernardino and Tommaso were recaptured and imprisoned under stricter guard. They were finally released in 1477.

² *Orlando Furioso*, xiii. 68. "Of the high and ancient stock of Aragon shall I not fail to sing the splendid Queen; so wise or so pure as she, see I neither Greek nor Latin woman praised in story, nor one to whom Fortune shows herself more friendly—since she shall be chosen by the Divine Bounty to bring forth the goodly progeny, Alfonso, Ippolito, and Isabella."

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of the Court for her safe delivery, and the Duke proceeded to keep it for her with great solemnity. On August 6, the tabernacle with the picture was removed from its original shrine and carried in procession through the city, the Duke himself following behind it. Returning to the palace, the courtiers holding lighted torches filed into the cortile, between the two statues of Niccolò and Borso, and, while all the people loudly chanted the *Te Deum Laudamus*, the picture was reverently deposited in the new chapel which the Duke had built to the Madonna and decorated with great cost and magnificence. What would not the modern student give for a sight of the votive picture that Leonora offered at the new sanctuary? It was, writes Francesco di Princivalle Ariosti, "the beauteous image of this most illustrious, royally born and glorious consort of our divine prince, the divine Leonora, showing us all her lovely features, with the royal canopy over her head; having at her feet the sweet likeness of the infant Isabella, her first-begotten, her delight, the joy of her heart; made by the hand of her servant and painter, Bartolommeo del Palazzo, because of a heartfelt vow that she made to the high Queen of the Heavens, in order that Her singular benignity might deign to watch over this her fortunate and happy delivery."¹

But at this very time there was another Ferrarese, a young man with harsh features and uncouth manners, upon whose face was stamped in unmistakable characters a hardly won victory of the spirit over the flesh, who gazed upon these festive scenes with little sympathy. Born in September,

¹ *La Origine et el Sito del novo Sacello*, MS. cit. This Bartolommeo del Palazzo appears to have been an indifferent artist, a butt for Court witticisms. Venturi (*op. cit.*, ii. pp. 395, 396) suggests that this image was in wax or stucco, but there is record of another picture by Bartolommeo.

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1452, in the very year of Borso's elevation to the ducal dignity, Girolamo Savonarola, the grandson of the great Michele, was now a student of medicine at the Studio. His father Niccolò—a courtier and a spendthrift—took him one day in his company to assist at one of the sumptuous entertainments in the ducal palace; but he steadfastly refused ever again to cross its threshold. The street that leads out from San Francesco to the shady avenues of poplars, laburnum and chestnut, which line the Herculean walls of Ferrara, is now called the Via Savonarola and the Via di Cisterna del Follo, and is one of the most quiet and deserted ways of the modern city. Seldom does anything more noisy pass up or down it than labouring bullocks drawing their loaded wains. San Francesco itself has little left to tell of its past glories. But in Savonarola's days the street was full of gay and courtly life, and rang to the loud revelry in the Palazzo Strozzi, which lay beyond the gardens of the friars of San Francesco (the fine palace now called the Palazzo Pareschi was not built by Ercole until several years later), where the brothers, Tito Vespasiano and Lorenzo di Nanni Strozzi, exercised princely hospitality. A little further on, another Florentine exile, Diotisalvi Neroni, had built himself a palace that still stands. But, adjoining the Palazzo Strozzi, was the less pretentious house of the Savonarola, opposite the little piazza and church of San Girolamo. And here Girolamo buried himself in his Thomist theology and kept his long vigils, shutting his ears to the sound of revelry, terribly convinced that the time was hopelessly out of joint. And yet, if the testimony of Fra Benedetto is to be accepted,¹

¹ In the *Vulnera Diligentis*, he professes to have had the story

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he longed once at least to enter the *amoroso ballo* with the rest, and Laodamia, a bastard daughter of Roberto di Nanni Strozzi, scornfully rejected his advances.

While the first splendid, exultant year of Duke Ercole's reign was running its many-coloured course, Girolamo in 1472 poured out his heart in a canzone entitled *De Ruina Mundi*, deploring the terrible corruption of the world, the decay of virtue, the triumph of every form of wickedness. The *tornata* strikes the key-note :—

Canzon, fa' che sia accorta,
Che a purpureo color tu non ti appoggia ;
Fuggi palazzo e loggia,
E fa' che tua ragion a pochi dica :
Chè a tutto il mondo tu sarai nemica.¹

From the splendid carnival of 1473, from the gorgeous festivities that welcomed Leonora of Aragon, he shrunk away into his own heart—into that “cell of self-knowledge,” of which St. Catherine of Siena spoke—and at length on April 24, 1475, while all Ferrara was keeping the feast of St. George, he fled away to Bologna, and entered the convent of San Domenico. “The reason,” he wrote to his father the next day from Bologna, “that moves me to enter religion is this ; first, the great misery of the world, the iniquities of men, the ravishing, the adultery, the robbery, the pride, the idolatry, the cruel blasphemies ; for the age hath come to such a pass that not one is found who acts rightly ; wherefore, many times the day, did I sing to myself this verse with tears : *Heu !*

from Marco, Girolamo's brother, who entered the Dominican Order as Frate Maurelio. See A. Gherardi, *Nuovi documenti e studi intorno a Girolamo Savonarola*, 2nd edition, pp. 7, 8.

¹ “Song, be thou careful not to put thy trust in purple hue ; shun palace and loggia, and tell thy meaning to few ; for to all the world thou shalt be an enemy.”

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fuge crudelis terras, fuge litus avarum."¹ Such seemed the Court and city of Ercole d' Este to the future prophet of righteousness.

Leonora gave birth to a second daughter, to whom the name Beatrice was given, on June 29, 1475. On this occasion "no public rejoicings were made, because they wished that it had been a boy."²

The year 1476 opened under favourable auspices. Pope Sixtus seemed unusually friendly. Some sixteen months before, on the death of Lorenzo Roverella, he had appointed a young nephew of his own, Fra Bartolommeo della Rovere, to the bishopric of Ferrara, and Ercole had received him graciously. The Pope now sent Monsignor Luca Pasi of Faenza, who was one of the Ferrarese agents at the Court of Rome, as special envoy; on January 21, after Mass had been sung at the high altar of the Cathedral, he presented Ercole with a silk cap adorned with pearls, and a sword of honour in a gold-worked sheath.³ Nor did Venice seem less cordial. On February 9, Leonora went with Sigismondo and Rinaldo d' Este, Niccolò da Correggio, Bianca della Mirandola, Marietta Strozzi Calcagnino (the wife of Messer Teofilo) and others, to pay a formal visit to the Doge and Signoria. She returned on the 23rd, suffering a great storm at sea on the way. The Duke went out to meet her, and it was noticed that, before she went up to her apartments, she visited the chapel of the Madonna of the Court, and prayed before the miraculous image.⁴

¹ See whole letter in Villari, *Savonarola*, i., document 2.

² *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 250.

³ Zambotto, *Silva Cronicarum* (Biblioteca di Ferrara, cod. 470).

⁴ Zambotto, f. 21. The chapel had just been rebuilt. Bianca della Mirandola at Venice had astounded the Doge and Signoria by her eloquence on behalf of her husband (Caleffini, *MS. cit.*, f. 24v.).

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On July 21, the much-desired son and heir was born to Ercole and Leonora in the palace of Schifanoia, and was named Alfonso. There was the utmost rejoicing throughout the city and duchy, with clanging of bells and salvos of artillery. For three days all the shops were closed, the prisoners were set free, and there was universal holiday. The people in a wild fever of excitement made bonfires of the benches of the Palazzo della Ragione and of the lecture-rooms of the Studio, and would have done the same with the doors of all the shops, had not a special edict of the Duke forbidden it.

But, in the meanwhile, Niccolò di Leonello d' Este had never relinquished his claim upon the Ferrarese throne. From his Mantuan refuge he had appealed time after time, always in vain, to Rome, to Venice, to Florence, even to France, with copious promises of what he would do, "when we shall have that State which is ours." The news of Alfonso's birth reduced him to desperation, and without the knowledge of his uncle, the Marquis of Mantua, who had refused to help him any more, he hired ships and men, and resolved upon a *coup d'état*.

He had a spy in Ferrara—Giovanni Antonio da Legnago, or Lignano, a priest attached to the household of Sigismondo d' Este—through whom he learned that the Duke intended to go to Belriguardo on the morning of Sunday, September 1, 1476. Ercole had received warning the day before that Niccolò was plotting something against him, but he did not imagine that there was any immediate danger, and set out for Belriguardo after hearing an early Mass. In the meanwhile Niccolò was sailing down the Po towards Ferrara, with five ships which seemed laden with hay and straw, but in reality concealed 700 armed men, mostly Veronese and

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Paduans, under the command of Francesco and Brunoro da Groppo. Early in the afternoon, Niccolò and his men arrived at the walls of the city, beneath Castel Tedaldo, where they were being rebuilt near the church of Santa Agata. Here they easily broke through, occupied one of the smaller gates, and pressed towards the piazza, shouting "Vela! Vela!" All the bells of the churches clashed out the alarm; the people were aghast, and did not realize what was on foot; no one joined the invaders. The captain of the guard of the piazza with his soldiers rushed into the Duomo and closed the doors: "I was then with my father and with Messer Hieronymo Ferrarino, a student of law and my companion," writes Zambotto, "at the Mass at the altar of Our Lady, and we saw the priest, who was saying the Gospel, take up the chalice and missal from the altar and run away without finishing the Mass." Shouting promise after promise to the people, Niccolò rode round the piazza; his adherents burst open the prisons, roaring "Vela, Vela," and then "Marco, Marco," to make men believe that the Venetians were with them—but all in vain. Three German students, who could not understand when told to shout "Vela," were done to death. Then Niccolò took his seat as sovereign of Ferrara in front of the Palazzo della Ragione, under the impression that the people would pay him homage. A few of his partisans within the city declared themselves; one of the more prominent sat down by his side, only to be shot dead by a crossbowman from a window of the Corte Vecchia.

At the first alarm, the Duchess had caught up the new baby in her arms, and, with her women carrying the two little girls, rushed along the covered passage to the Castello Vecchio. Here Sigismondo had raised the bridges and held

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the place with a handful of men, while Rinaldo occupied Castello Novo. Wild rumours spread as to the huge numbers of the Veleschi. News had reached Ercole of what had happened ; he approached the walls with a handful of horsemen, but was met by the secretary of the Duchess, who declared that the enemy numbered 14,000 men. The Duke's courage failed him. Understanding that the Duchess and her children were safe for the present in the Castello, he spurred off to gather troops, first to Argenta and then to Lugo.

These, however, were not needed. Realizing the true state of affairs, Sigismondo sallied out of the Castello, collected men in the Borgo Leone (which was then outside the walls), re-entered the city and joined forces with Rinaldo. Together the two brothers with their followers rode down the Via de Sabbioni towards the piazza. Niccolò with his two Paduan condottieri had already fled, seeing the game was up, under the pretext of collecting reinforcements in the neighbourhood. A number of his adherents were seeking food, when Sigismondo and Rinaldo, crying "Diamante! Diamante! havoc, havoc!" burst upon them, and cut eighteen or so to pieces, "which was a cruel thing to behold." There was a grim fight round the Palazzo della Ragione, where a handful of Veleschi made a desperate resistance ; they were hunted from room to room, and hurled out of the windows to be dashed to pieces on the pavement below.

Closely pursued by Sigismondo and the crossbowmen, Niccolò and his friends reached their ships, and made for Bondeno. There the passage was hotly contested, and, after a sharp fight, the ships were taken, with the two condottieri and some 250 men, including Azzo da Este, a descendant of

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a bastard of the House. Niccolò himself escaped into the country, was found hiding in a swamp, and brought back to Ferrara the same evening.

The next day the Duke returned to Ferrara. The dead were still lying in heaps about the streets and squares ; the three castles were filled with prisoners. "Messer Sigismondo and Messer Rinaldo da Este, his brothers, went to meet him," writes Zambotto, who was present, "with all the nobles of the city ; and, when he arrived at the piazza, and heard all the people crying *diamante, diamante, Ercole, Ercole*, and saw his wife and children at the balcony of the Court, all weeping with gladness, he could not contain himself, but began to weep too for joy at the fidelity of the people. And straightway he dismounted and entered into the Duomo, and went to the high altar to thank God, who hath liberated him from very great peril of his life and of his State."¹

Two days of thanksgiving and popular rejoicings followed, and then the work of vengeance began. On September 3, the condottieri and eighteen others were hanged from the balcony and windows of the Palazzo della Ragione, and five more from the battlements of the Castello Vecchio. During the night that followed, Niccolò was privately beheaded in the cortile of the Castello. On the following morning it was proclaimed on the part of the Duke that all the nobles, doctors, officials and citizens of Ferrara should go to pay honour to the body of Messer Niccolò d'Este to the tomb. The head had been sewn on to the trunk ; the body was arrayed in a long robe of gold brocade, a crimson cap was placed upon the head and new gloves upon the hands ; and so it was carried out of Castello Vecchio by the knights of the city, and then successively by the doctors

¹ Zambotto, f. 28v.

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of law and the physicians to the church of San Francesco, with great pomp, attended by all the Ferrarese clergy. The Ambassador of Naples, the Visdomino of the Venetians, the Rectors of the Universities, followed as chief mourners, with Scipione d' Este (a bastard of Meliaduse) representing the kindred of the slain man, Jacopo Trotti the Judge of the twelve Sages, with the magistrates, members of the Duke's secret council and all the gentlemen of the Court. "And many could not refrain from tears, and Madama the Duchess, who was looking on from the balcony of the Court with her damsels, wept bitterly." He was laid in the red tomb of the House of Este in San Francesco, where so many of his forefathers and kindred slept.¹

Azzo da Este had shared his fate, but was buried without any pomp or ceremony, "in his shirt all blood-stained," as Caleffini has it, in the same church. A series of hangings and beheadings followed. In compassion for his age, the deathsmen would fain have spared the life of a certain Luca, Niccolò's old cook, and on the scaffold they bade him say "Viva il Diamante," and be pardoned. The old man shouted "Viva la Vela," and died. Some two or three hundred men, who protested that they had acted in ignorance, were sentenced to lose hand or eye, but instead were made over to different courtiers and even to convents, to be put to ransom—and most of them were set free without payment. In November, the priest spy was brought out

¹ Caleffini, *MS. cit.*, f. 27; Zambotto, ff. 28v, 29. Niccolò di Leonello d' Este was never married, but left three illegitimate children: Girolamo, Battista and Vincenzo (cf. I. Giorgi, *Frammento d' Iconografia Estense*, in the *Bullettino dell' Istituto Storico Italiano*, No. 2). In after years, Ercole made them a provision, and Isabella d' Este, with her characteristic generosity, took them under her protection. See Appendix II., documents 16 and 19.

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upon a high scaffold erected in front of the Duomo, and there degraded. But first "there was read a brief of the Pope, which committed this punishment to the Excellence of our Duke, and, at the end of the said brief, the Pope exhorted the Duke to use pity towards him and pardon him, according to the example of the Crucified, who pardoned the Jews. The priest said that, rather than he should be degraded, Our Lady would work a miracle; but all the same he was degraded without miracles." He was taken back to the Castello Vecchio as a layman; then, a few days later, brought out again and, after his condemnation had been read, hanged from a window of the Palazzo della Ragione.¹ Alberto Masolino and Ardillaso de' Panciaticchi, Niccolò's chancellor and equerry, were beheaded in December. "They died willingly for love of their lord, and they could have saved themselves, if they had chosen, by confessing a certain thing to the Duke that he wished to know."² A third, Antonio di Filippo, who had influential Ferrarese connections, was pardoned on the scaffold.

Then at last the Duke gave commands that the work of blood should cease, and that no further search should be made for those implicated. On Christmas Eve one of his judges presented him with a paper upon which was written a long list of nobles and gentlemen of the duchy, with a valuation of their estates, whom he accused of having been privy to Niccolò's conspiracy, urging the Duke to put

¹ Zambotto, ff. 32, 32v. He states that "this priest confessed that Messer Niccolò had determined to murder Messer Sigismondo and Messer Rinaldo da Este, and to take Madama Leonora our Duchess, with the children, and send them to a city, the name of which it is better to pass over in silence." Venice is apparently meant.

² Caleffini, *MS. cit.*, f. 29.

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them to death and to confiscate their goods. Ercole was standing by the side of a large fire. He took the paper from the hand of the officious judge and, without reading a single name, threw it into the flames. "Thus, with their names and their possessions which are written here, let the memory perish of all that they have thought, tried and done against me."¹

In the meanwhile, the Most Illustrious Signoria of Venice had sent ambassadors, Messer Paolo Morosini and Messer Marco Barbarigo, to congratulate Ercole upon his triumph and to make excuses for the presence in Niccolò's attempt of men from Vicenza and Padua—all of which Ercole had received with the utmost graciousness. The ruler of Bologna, Giovanni II Bentivoglio, indignantly repelled the suggestion that he had aided Niccolò with men and horses; and Ercole wrote to assure him that he was most ready, if necessary, to write through all Italy, that every one might know that he held him, Bentivoglio, *per suo caro e intrinseco amico*.² And on October 4, the feast of St. Francis, the baptism of the little Alfonso—*il nostro dolcissimo primogenito, il nostro puttino*, as the Duke calls him in his letters to his orator at Florence—had been solemnized in the Duomo by the Bishop of Chioggia, with the Republics of Venice and Florence standing god-fathers by their special envoys.³ Thus was the future victor of Ravenna, the *uomo terribile* among the princes of the Cinquecento, born into a

¹ Cf. Giraldi, *Ecatommiti*, x. 3; Sardi, p. 288; Cappelli, *op. cit.*, p. 426.

² Letter of October 17, 1476. Dallari, *Carteggio tra i Bentivoglio e gli Estensi*, p. 22.

³ See the letters from Ercole to Niccolò Bendedei, Estensian Orator in Florence, in the *Atti e Memorie di Storia Patria per le Provincie Modenesi e Parmensi*, series I., vol. 3.

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heritage of sanguinary feud, at a moment when his own life had been threatened in the cradle and Ferrara was still wet with his cousin's blood. Little wonder that, in after years, he bettered the instruction !

It was, indeed, a year of plotting and bloodshed. Two months later, on the Feast of St. Stephen, the infamous Duke of Milan—Galeazzo Maria Sforza—was stabbed to death by three noble-minded assassins in the church of San Stefano. Ercole was at Mass in the chapel of the Madonna in the Court, when the news reached Ferrara from his ambassador in Milan, Roberto Boschetti, in whose arms the Duke had breathed his last. He was prompt in rendering assistance to the widowed Duchess Bona, who was the regent for her young son, the hapless Gian Galeazzo. In the following summer, the baby prince Alfonso was solemnly betrothed to Anna Sforza, Gian Galeazzo's sister, a little girl about a year older than himself. The three brothers of the late Duke—Sforza, Lodovico il Moro and Monsignor Ascanio—opposed the rule of Bona's favourite, Cecco Simonetta ; they were banished from Milan in the following year, and put under bounds at Naples, Pisa and Perugia. They stayed for a few days at Ferrara in June on their ways to their places of banishment, much honoured by Ercole and lodged in Schifanoia, where on the first evening, as they sat at supper under the loggia, two blind poets, Giovanni and Francesco, who appear to have been Florentines in the Ferrareseservice, sang to them. Among other things, the Duke entertained them with a race of leopards in the Barco. A month later, on July 14, the marriage of the two babies, Alfonso and Anna, was celebrated in the presence of Bona's ambassadors, " who were received in Ferrara with very great honour, and lodged in the Court of the most illustrious

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Duke Ercole, and stayed there triumphantly for many days.”¹

Leonora was not present at these festivities, and did not witness the betrothal of her baby boy. She had gone to Naples in May, to visit her father, and there in September, 1477, she gave birth to a second son, Ferdinando or Ferrando, as his father always calls him in his letters. The Cardinal of San Pietro in Vincoli, Giuliano della Rovere, who was then at Naples, stood sponsor. In her absence, Ercole had relations with one of the ladies of her household, Isabella Arduino, who in March, 1478, bore him a son, Giulio.² This adulterous intrigue stands quite alone in Ercole's life, and we have no trace, not even the faintest suggestion, of any subsequent act of infidelity towards his wife. Leonora returned to Ferrara in November, leaving Ferrando and Beatrice at her father's Court in charge of her sister-in-law, the Duchess of Calabria. In March, 1479, the third son of Ercole and Leonora—afterwards to be famous as Ippolito—was born. The names of these three—Ferrando, Ippolito, and Giulio—were destined to be linked horribly together in after years, and with that of Alfonso.

There can be no doubt that Ercole was sincerely attached to his wife. Profoundly religious (even as he himself

¹ *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 254. By the *Court* is always meant the Corte Vecchia, the present Palazzo del Municipio. But in this year, 1477, probably in consequence of the alarm caused by Niccolò's attempt, Ercole began to have rooms made in the Castello Vecchio, Pietro di Benvenuto being the architect. The work was completed by the end of December, when the Duke and Duchess took up their residence there. Caleffini, *MS. cit.*, ff. 29v, 30v.

² This Isabella, the daughter of Niccolò d' Arduino, married a certain Jacomo Mainente of Ferrara. Three months after their marriage this child Giulio was born, whom the Duke acknowledged and brought up as his son. (Caleffini, *MS. cit.*, f. 32, the passage being apparently an interpolation by Giulio Mosti.)

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gradually grew to be), heroically brave and steadfast in times of stress and danger, a tender and affectionate mother (she treated Ercole's illegitimate daughter Lucrezia as though she were her own child, and, in later years, took some care for Giulio's interests), kind and gracious to her subjects and inferiors, the first Duchess of Ferrara is one of the noblest figures of women that Italian history has to show us. The Duke, as years went on, grew more and more to rely upon her, to look to her for strength and resource at his need.

It is tempting to linger over the collection of his letters to her, which are still preserved in Modena. Later on, they deal with other themes; the intrigues and perplexities of the Court of Milan; the affairs of their sons. But even those in these first years of their married life show the complete confidence the Duke had in her. In his numerous absences from the capital, she is the ruler of the State, though in difficult emergencies she has to consult her brother-in-law, the most illustrious Messer Sigismondo. "There is no need for your Ladyship to make any excuse," Ercole writes to her once, when the Duchess has forwarded a letter from Messer Alberto Cortesi, the Ferrarese orator at Venice, which she says she has opened by mistake; "you know well that you can open all our letters and do as you think fit, for we are right well content thereat; nay, you do well to send off those which you can dispatch without us."¹ As Lent comes on, being away at Reggio, he charges her to look to the protection of the Jews in Ferrara and to caution the preachers not to excite the populace against them in their sermons:—

"It sometimes happens," he writes, "in seasons like this,

¹ Letter of July 16, 1479. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*.

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that the preachers who preach in the churches of the city urge and excite the people to hunt the Jews, and to make them go to hear the Word of God against their will, in such wise that, on account of what these say, they are sometimes attacked. Therefore, your Ladyship had better have them told beforehand that they must behave themselves in their preaching in such a way that these Jews of ours who dwell in our city be not molested nor forced, by their persuasions, to go to hear sermons, and that they be not interfered with in any way through words of theirs.”¹

Little presents, too, from time to time, are exchanged between husband and wife when separated—sometimes rather quaintly. This same Lent, for instance, Leonora sends him an egg of an ostrich—perhaps a new acquisition to his menagerie in the Barco—forgetting, apparently, that the Duke keeps very strict rules about fasting. Ercole thanks her in his reply, but, because he wants her to “enjoy it for love of us,” sends it back to her; “and especially because now, as you know, we do not eat eggs, and if it were kept till Easter, we believe that it would not keep good. But even if we ate them at present, we had much rather that you should enjoy it than us.”²

Only once does the correspondence reveal a misunderstanding in these years, and then, though it appears a very

¹ Letter of February 26, 1479. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*. Ercole took a strong line in protecting the Jews throughout his duchies. During the carnival of 1480, a scholar from Forlì mortally wounded a Jew, the son of the Salomone already mentioned, and was hanged in chains from a window of the Palazzo della Ragione, to the great indignation of the people. When in October, 1481, a report was spread that the Ferrarese Jews had crucified a Christian child, Ercole had the accusation fully investigated and proved to be false. Caleffini, *MS. cit.*, ff. 34v., 37.

² Letter of March 1, 1479. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*.

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trivial matter, the Duke thinks it of sufficient importance to write her a letter of remonstrance—a charming letter in its way—in his own hand :—

“ Most loving Lady mine,

“ I have been told that your Ladyship is angry with the keepers of the stable, because I have brought away here with me a palfrey of yours, without your leave. I am very sorry to have done anything that displeases you ; but I should never have believed that, for so little a thing, you would have taken it ill, especially as the horse is not good for you nor for any woman that you have. This alone distresses me, that I believed that I had more authority with you than I have, and that if, instead of bringing it solely for my own personal use, I had given it away, you would not have said anything but that I had done well—as you can do with my things. If you had taken, not merely a horse that is worth twenty-five florins, but anything that I have, I could have said nothing but that it was well done. However, I tell you that the horse is here, sound, and if you want it, inform me, for I shall send it to you at once ; or if you want any other that I have. I shall never think that I have divided any possession with you ; because I wish all that belongs to me to be as much yours as it is mine. To your Ladyship I commend myself. Written with my own hand at Medelana on the twelfth day of August, 1481.

“ HERCULES DUKE OF FERRARA.”¹

Meanwhile, in the general break up of the Italian peace that followed the assassination of Giuliano de' Medici in the Duomo of Florence on Sunday, April 26, 1478, Ercole had

¹ Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*.

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taken the field against his suzerain, Pope Sixtus, and his father-in-law, King Ferrante. He accepted the baton of command from Lorenzo de' Medici, as Captain-General of the League that defended Florence from the allied powers of Rome and Naples (led by Duke Alfonso of Calabria, Leonora's brother, and Federigo da Montefeltro, Duke, since 1474, of Urbino), and he invaded the Sienese territory. Suffering from ill-health, dreading Neapolitan poison and hardly working in harmony with his colleague, the Marquis of Mantua, full of superstitious apprehensions (the sainted nun of his House, Beata Beatrice d' Este, had cried aloud from her tomb, and he himself had seen a vision while sleeping in his tent), Ercole gained but little honour in this war, and his good faith had been questioned.¹ And, in fact, save for the diplomatists on either side, there was no honour to be gained. The members of the League were divided against themselves; Mantuans and Ferrarese had come to blows in the camp, and Ercole's life had been endangered in their brawls; Venice, disliking the Florentine choice of Ercole as General, had been sparing in sending men and money; the Milanese contingent had been recalled to protect the Duchess Bona from a sudden invasion by Lodovico il Moro and Roberto da San Severino. Ercole himself was forced to hasten to Pavia to repel them; but found that Bona had made peace with Lodovico—that fatal peace which was to cost her young son his duchy, if not his life.

During Ercole's absence from the seat of war, and on precisely the same day as Bona's surrender, September 7, 1479, the only really reputable *fatto d' armi* in the campaign was fought; the Dukes of Calabria and Urbino together gained a complete victory over the Florentines and their

¹ Cf. Rosmini, *Vita di Gian Jacopo Trivulzio*, ii. p. 36; Machiavelli, *Istorie Fiorentine*, viii.

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allies, under Sigismondo d' Este and Costanzo Sforza, at Poggio Imperiale near Poggibonsi. This is the battle recorded with so much mediaeval pomp and quaint circumstance in the fresco by Giovanni di Cristofano and Francesco d' Andrea in the Palazzo Pubblico at Siena, where the Sieneſe are represented as playing a prominent part in the ſtorming of the camp of the League. It is ſomewhat exaggerated in Boiardo's Italian eclogues—in which the whole credit of the action is aſſigned to Alſonſo of Calabria.¹ Galeotto della Mirandola, Rodolfo Gonzaga (younger brother of the Marquis Federigo of Mantua), and Niccolò da Correggio, were among the priſoners.

In the meanwhile, Leonora ruled the duchy with dexterity and ability, but appears to have leaned over much upon the four brothers Trotti—Count Paolo Antonio, the ducal ſecretary, Jacopo, “who is always near Madama,” Galeazzo and Brandeligi. “They were at this time the chief men of Ferrara,” writes Caleffini, “and almoſt more eſteemed than our Lord Duke Meſſer Ercole and all the others of the moſt illuſtrious Houſe of Eſte.” He implies that they made themſelves wealthy by unlawful means.² The reſult was that the Court ſplit into two factions, for and againſt the Trotti.

A moſt unfortunate conſequence of this war for Ercole—and one fated to prove diſaſtrous in the future—was the

¹ “Tra tante alte vittorie una ne è tale
Che non ſe amenta in terra la magiore :
Il Leon vero, e queſto altro da l' ale,
La Vipera ſublime e il ſacro Ocelo
Sconfiſſe inſieme a Poggio Imperiale.”

Ecl. ii. 50–54. Cf. *Ecl.* x. 121–126 ; *Orlando Innamorato*, II. xxvii. 57.

² *MS. cit.*, f. 34.

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Pope's displeasure. Sixtus regarded his conduct as an act of rank rebellion in a vassal of the Church. "I know," wrote Battista Bendedei, one of Ercole's agents in Rome, "that his Holiness appears to be more wroth with your Excellence than with any one else, and even more than with the Florentines."¹ In August, the Pope prepared a tremendous Bull against "that son of iniquity, Ercole of the Marquesses of Este, whom of late we decorated with the ducal title and honour, and constituted Vicar-General in temporal things in our city of Ferrara and its county and district." In it, Ercole is declared a rebel and a perjured traitor; he has merited the major excommunication with the forfeiture of his ducal dignity, his vicariate and all his fiefs; and, with his sons and nephews, is incapable of obtaining these or similar in the future. The vicariate having thus come to an end, Ferrara and all its district has devolved to the Church. All Ercole's subjects are released from their allegiance, and bidden to recognize the Pope alone as their immediate Lord and Superior.²

Hearing of what was preparing, Luca Pasi sought an audience of the Pope, and, prostrate at his feet, implored him not to do the Duke this shame, urging him by every argument he could muster not to publish the Bull. "Messer Luca," said his Holiness, "the Duke could have sent his

¹ Dispatch to Ercole of May 28, 1479. Balan, v. p. 294.

² Bull of August 17, 1479, in *Archivio Vaticano*, xxxi. 62 (*Sixti quarti Bullae et Brevia diversa*), ff. 218-221v. A similar Bull of excommunication and deprivation against Roberto Malatesta, Galeotto Manfredi, Antonio Maria degli Ordelaffi and Costanzo Sforza is dated August 16 (*loc. cit.*, ff. 177-181v). The Bull against Ercole is printed by Theiner, *Codex Diplomaticus*, iii. coll. 501-503. Although never actually published, it is cited by Pope Julius II as a precedent in his famous Bull of excommunication against Alfonso I in August, 1510.

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forces into the field and not have gone personally into the enterprise to thwart our designs. He has been most ungrateful towards us. We tell thee that the Mantuans put great pressure upon us to invest Messer Niccolò, and offered us a good sum of money. But when the said Messer Niccolò came to assail his State, we wrote to the Duke of Urbino to put our troops in order, and, if necessary, to go to support the Duke of Ferrara. We sent him that sword as another sign of love, and many other things have we done to please him, from whom we never expected anything save true obedience—more than from any other Lord in Italy. And, what is worse, he has not chosen to pay our tribute, neither in whole nor in part, which shows that he is not so devoted to us as thou sayest. He shows open rebellion to us in not at least paying our tribute. It is true that we are declaring him excommunicate and deprived of our vicariate of Ferrara; and, if we do not do it together with those other Lords, we shall do it incontinently in another Bull.” But Luca urged him still, especially reminding him that his nephew had been made Bishop of Ferrara and treated with much kindness by the Duke. “Go then,” said the Pope, “and tell the Bishop to admonish the Duke that for the future he mend his ways towards us, and, for love of him, we shall defer the publication of the Bull against the Duke.” “If I were in the place of your Lordship, who is most prudent,” wrote Luca to Ercole, describing the interview, “I should look to it that the tribute was sent at once.”¹

The diplomacy of Lorenzo de' Medici brought the war to an end in March, 1480, with a separate treaty of peace be-

¹ Dispatch of Luca Pasi detto il Faentino, October 27, 1479. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio degli Ambasciatori—Roma*.

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tween Naples and Florence, followed by a formal league between these two powers and the Duchy of Milan. The growing apprehensions of a Turkish descent upon the shores of Italy induced the Pope to accede to this peace; but in April he and Venice, considering themselves slighted and abandoned by their allies, and suspecting the designs of the King of Naples, entered into an alliance for the reciprocal protection of their States, and declared the Count Girolamo the Captain-General of their league.

The rebellious vassals of the Church had been left to make their own peace with the Pope, and in April diplomatic relations were officially renewed between Ferrara and the Holy See, Battista Bendedei returning to Rome as resident Ferrarese ambassador. His instructions were first to visit the Count Girolamo, to protest to him the Duke's friendship and ask him to arrange the audience with the Pope. When admitted to the latter's presence, he was to ask pardon in the Duke's name and to express the profound contrition of his Excellence, if he had erred in any way. He brought with him a part of the money of the tribute, and was to promise that the rest would be paid as soon as possible.² The Pope

¹ Venice and the Curia had begun the negotiations in the early part of 1479. The Venetians at first objected to the two conditions that the Pope proposed: a general league of the Italian States and a Crusade against the Turk, with whom they had just made peace. Girolamo Riario demanded Rimini and Pesaro, the fiefs of Roberto Malatesta and Costanzo Sforza, the one being the Venetian captain-general and the other under their protection. This the Venetians felt bound to refuse; but, the Ten instructing the Cardinal Pietro Foscari to assure the Pope that they were disposed to do their utmost for his nephews in every possible emergency, and the Pope not insisting upon the General League and Crusade, the alliance was concluded on April 16, 1480, and published a month later in Venice. See E. Piva, *La Guerra di Ferrara del 1482*, i. pp. 28-31.

² *Istruzione per Roma a Battista Bendedei*, April 18, 1480. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio degli Ambasciatori—Roma*.

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received him on May 11. His Holiness professed the utmost indignation against Ercole, not so much for his having entered into the League, as for his having taken up arms against him. "For myself," he said, "I care little; but the honour of God is concerned." He protested that he had never made this war against the Florentines, but only against Lorenzo de' Medici and his accomplices, "enemies of the Church and of God," and because of the things which had been done and said, which for the honour of God he had not been able to endure. He did not deny that he had many times been greatly moved to anger by the Duke, seeing how he had aided Lorenzo and assailed the Perugians and Sienese. He could never excuse him for having, contrary to the obligation of his oath of fidelity, taken up arms against the Church, even though he had entered the League. He, however, finally accepted his excuses, pardoned him freely and gave his benediction, but added a solemn warning. Let the Duke remember that the House of Este owed almost everything to the Church, and not make an enemy of her; another time his Excellence made a league, or anything of that kind, let it always be with the stipulation of not taking arms against the Church. Otherwise he would come to an evil end.¹ The same day the Pope informed Bendedei of the League between the Church and Venice.

Ercole had already received the notification of this new League of "the Serenity of the Doge with the Holiness of our Lord" from his ambassador in Venice, Messer Alberto Cortesi, and from the beginning he realized that it meant danger. He had sent, dated April 28, a note in cipher to Battista Bendedei, informing him of the matter and bidding

¹ Dispatch of Bendedei to Ercole, May 11, 1480. Balan, v. pp. 294, 295.



A Court Jester of Ferrara.

By Rosso Cossi.

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him make no delay in paying the four thousand ducats of the tribute, in order to put the Pope in a good humour, "for it seems to us that, because of this new League made with the Venetians, we must be very careful in our dealings with his Holiness."¹ He was soon to learn to his cost that his instinct had not deceived him in this matter; but, for the present, he was anxious that Bendedei should strive his very utmost to get the tribute which was paid (or frequently not paid) for Ferrara remitted completely, or reduced to a mere formal recognition of the papal suzerainty. The most promising means to this end seemed to be the corruption of the Count Girolamo, through whom the tribute was usually paid. The handing over of the four thousand ducats already mentioned to him, as a direct bribe to use his influence, did not seem adequate. The King of Naples proposed—and Ercole shows no repugnance to the idea—that Bendedei should promise the Count that the full tribute should be paid to him during the lifetime of the Pope in any case, but suggests that he should use his influence to get the nominal amount reduced, the ambassador being careful not to state to what extent. As the reduction thus conceded would hold good also for the successors of Sixtus, while during his uncle's lifetime Girolamo would pocket the whole difference between the old and the new tribute, it is obvious that the greater the reduction that Girolamo could induce the Pope to grant, the better for both him and the Duke; and his Majesty cynically expressed his opinion that this scheme would produce "true and good friendship" between the two. A little later, however, Ercole wrote to Bendedei

¹ *Minute Ducali per Roma a Battista Bendedei*, April 28, 1480. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio degli Ambasciatori—Roma*.

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that he had better do nothing in this matter, until he got more intimate with the Pontiff and the Count.¹

Meanwhile, Ercole prudently strengthened his position by arranging the marriages of his two legitimate daughters, Isabella and Beatrice, to Gian Francesco Gonzaga, eldest son of the Marchese Federigo of Mantua, and Lodovico Sforza "il Moro," who was now virtual ruler of the duchy of Milan. At the same time the young Duke Gian Galeazzo was betrothed to Isabella of Aragon, daughter of the Duke of Calabria and niece of Ercole's wife. Lucrezia, Ercole's illegitimate daughter, had been already promised to Annibale Bentivoglio, the eldest son of his friend and ally, Giovanni Bentivoglio.² At the beginning of June, the Venetian ambassador, Zaccaria Barbaro, attempted to induce Ercole to enter into the League with Venice and the Pope; but the Duke declined,³ and, in the following July, accepted the post of Lieutenant-General of the rival League of Naples, Milan and Florence, with the annual stipend of 50,000 ducats of gold in time of peace and 80,000 in time of war.⁴ This same summer he received an embassy from Edward IV of England, who invested him with the Order of the Garter. In September, Sigismondo, the last child of Ercole's marriage, was born, and named after the brother

¹ *Ibid.*, *Minute Ducali*, May 15 and May 19, 1480.

² A dispensation had to be obtained from the Pope for this marriage, because of the spiritual affinity of the two parties, Ercole having been the godfather of Annibale. See Dallari, pp. 23, 24. The Bentivoglio were, strictly speaking, not Lords of Bologna, but simply the chief citizens of the Bolognese Republic. Throughout the correspondence between Ercole and Giovanni, the latter is always styled Magnificence—never Excellence.

³ "Habiamo pocha voglia de impaciarse cum loro." Letter from Ercole to Giovanni Bentivoglio, June 3, 1480 (Dallari, p. 41). He prays Bentivoglio to keep this a strict secret.

⁴ Dallari, p. 41, note.

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who had so faithfully clung to him through all the vicissitudes of his fortunes.

At the beginning of 1481 young Savonarola returned to Ferrara, now in the Dominican habit as Fra Girolamo, sent by his superiors from Bologna to the convent of the Angeli to preach the Lent to his own countrymen. At Ferrara he shunned all his old acquaintance and saw as little as possible of his relations, wishing to keep himself utterly dead to all his past life. His preaching fell absolutely flat ; at first the Ferrarese flocked in numbers to hear him, but after the first sermon he preached to almost empty benches.

“ Our Saviour says that no prophet is accepted in his own country,” he wrote to his mother Elena, a few years later ; “ suffer me then to stay in the vineyard of Christ, outside my own country, where I know and have had actual experience that I produce more fruit for my own soul and the souls of others than I would in Ferrara. If I stayed there and strove to do what I do in other cities, I know that the same would be said to me as was said to Christ Himself by the fellow-countrymen of Christ, who, when He preached, said : Is not this man a carpenter, and the son of a carpenter, and the son of Mary ? And they did not deign to listen to Him. So would they say of me : Is not this man that Maestro Girolamo who did such and such sins, who was like us ? Now know we well who he is. And they would not listen devoutly to my words. Wherefore at Ferrara it has many times been said to me, by some who saw me thus employed in going from city to city, that our friars must have need of men, as who should say : If they employ thee in such great things, who art vile, certes they have need of men. But outside of my own country, such words are not said to me ; nay, when I wish to depart, men and women weep and

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greatly appraise my words. I do not write this because I seek human praises, nor because I take pleasure in praise ; but to show you my reason for thus keeping out of our country, in order that you may know that I do so willingly, because I know that I am doing a thing more pleasing to God, and more salutary to myself and to the souls of my neighbours."

Other things than preaching excited the city of Duke Ercole just then. There was marching to and fro of soldiers ; "daily cast of brazen cannon, and foreign mart for implements of war," much "post-haste and romage in the land." Yet were there some few that hearkened. One day, on business of his Order, the young Friar was travelling up the Po in a small ship towards Mantua, and a party of soldiers were on board, gambling and blaspheming ; he suddenly turned to them and admonished them, whereupon they fell at his feet, imploring pardon. But a terrible tempest of war and disaster was about to burst over Ferrara and the House of Este ; already people were leaving the city, the Studio was closing, and the convent of the Angeli, being then outside the walls, was threatened. Savonarola's provincial sent him to Florence before the end of the year, and he never saw Ferrara again.

¹ Letter from Pavia, January 25, 1490 (*Lettere inedite di Fra Girolamo Savonarola*, ed. P. Vincenzo Marchese. *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Appendix, vol. 8, p. 111).

Chapter VI

THE WAR OF FERRARA

THE horrible taking of Otranto by the Turks in August, 1480, had for a moment hushed the dissensions of Italy. But the death of the great Muhammed in May, 1481, liberated her from the immediate pressure of the Ottoman terror. Her princes could safely turn again to rending each other. The Turks in Otranto, besieged by the combined fleets of Rome and Naples, were forced to surrender to the Duke of Calabria in September. In the hour of victory, the mutual jealousy of the papal and Neapolitan officers blazed out afresh ; and the Pope, though he declared himself ready to pledge his own tiara to raise funds, was unable to obtain further support for this Crusade which, so far as his briefs and his spoken words went, he seemed sincerely to have at heart.¹ Giuliano della Rovere was still away on his pacific legation in France, and the more unscrupulous papal nephew, the infamous Count Girolamo Riario, had a free hand.

Girolamo was mainly moved by hatred of the King of Naples, desire of taking vengeance upon the Duke of Ferrara,

¹ The documents cited by Pastor, ii. pp. 504, 505 and document 131, can only be held to prove the sincerity of the Pope on the assumption that Sixtus was not privy to the offer that Girolamo was making at this very time to Venice.

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cupidity of enriching himself at the expense of both. Against the former he was urged on by Virginio Orsini, who had been deprived of his fiefs of Alba and Tagliacozzo in the Abruzzi. After the peace of 1480, Girolamo had attempted to punish Costanzo Sforza, the Lord of Pesaro, for his assistance to Lorenzo de' Medici, and Ercole's prompt aid had been instrumental in enabling Sforza to checkmate these designs. Already master of Imola, Girolamo, after the death of Pino degli Ordelaffi, had occupied Forlì, and had received the investiture of that papal fief from Sixtus. The rightful successor of Pino, Antonio Maria degli Ordelaffi, the legitimate son of Pino's brother Cecco, took refuge in Ferrarese territory, and was kindly received by Ercole, who made him an annual provision and left him free to go to Lugo and Bagnacavallo, whence, with the aid of Galeotto Manfredi of Faenza, he could plot to recover his State.

And Girolamo could safely count on winning the Pope to second his desires. Sixtus dreaded the Aragonese rulers of Naples; he was readily convinced that, even as Ferrante had betrayed him in the matter of the separate peace with Lorenzo de' Medici, so now he had betrayed him again and would desert him in the face of the Turk. He had never forgiven Ercole d' Este for having led the Florentines in the late war. He was further exasperated by the fact that the Duke made much difficulty about paying the annual tribute of 4,100 florins to the Papal Treasury, was always in arrears, and frequently forbade the publication of the papal Bulls in his dominions. Even while the forces of the Church and the Kingdom lay together before the walls of Otranto, Girolamo had determined that the new alliance between Rome and Venice should be turned to the destruction of Aragonese rule in Naples. And he had a tempting bait

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to offer the Most Serene Republic. Ferrara should be the price of Venetian co-operation in his designs.

Relations had been growing very strained between Venice and Ercole. The Venetians had long looked with covetous eyes upon the Polesine of Rovigo ; this district, lying as it does between the Adige and the Po, seemed to them to be their natural property. Disputes about the boundaries had become acute. And there were other causes for ill feeling. From the beginning of the twelfth century the Venetians had enjoyed special privileges and immunities in Ferrara, which they now accused Ercole of violating. The Ferrarese could only receive merchandise by sea from Venice, and were bound to keep the waters of the Po open for Venetian traffic. They were pledged not to make fortresses on the Po, without Venetian leave. Also the Venetians claimed to have the sole right of manufacturing salt from their works at Cervia, and of supplying the Ferrarese with it, whereas the latter could obtain salt in abundance, produced by nature at their very feet at Comacchio and other places in the Duchy, from which they were cut off by these conventions with Venice. The Republic, further, maintained, as we have seen, their special functionary at Ferrara, the Visdomino, whose presence and insistence upon Venetian rights did not make for harmony.¹ Relying upon the support of the Neapolitan League, Ercole was beginning to desire to free himself. The Visdomino, Vettor Contarini, had already made himself unpopular with the Ferrarese, by his sentences against contraband sellers of salt. He now, in August, 1481, arrested an ecclesiastic for debt, and was

¹ These privileges, dating from 1101, were confirmed by treaties of 1191 and 1405, the Visdomino also being first mentioned in 1191 (Piva, i. pp. 9-11, 17).

in consequence excommunicated by the vicar of Bishop Bartolommeo della Rovere, who was, as usual, absent at Rome. Contarini appealed to the Duke, who declined to give redress. "Then, Excellence, I shall leave the city," said the Venetian. "Your Magnificence will find the gates open," answered Ercole. Contarini took him at his word, upon which a ducal secretary was promptly sent after him to apologise. The Doge summoned the Ferrarese ambassador, Alberto Cortesi, to the Consiglio dei Pregadi, and gave a peremptory intimation to the Duke publicly to revoke the excommunication and reinstate the Visdomino, to compensate him and make an example of all concerned, and to observe the conventions for the future. The Bishop of Ferrara disavowed the action of his vicar, and assured the Venetians that the Pope was very much displeased at the excommunication, and had professed himself on the side of the Republic. Ercole yielded; the Visdomino returned, furious and arrogant, threatening deadly vengeance upon Jacopo Trotti and his brothers, to whom he ascribed the slight that had been put upon him.¹

These negotiations were still in progress when, in the last days of the siege of Otranto, Girolamo Riario left his Romagnole dominions and set out in person for Venice. On his way he visited the Duke of Urbino, who, old as he was, was still reckoned the first soldier of Italy, and Roberto Malatesta, Lord of Rimini, who held the office of Captain-General of the Venetian army. The latter he found apt; but the Duke (who was Roberto's father-in-law, but his personal foe) indignantly rejected his overtures, and, abandoning his habitual sphinx-like calm, gave free vent to

¹ Romanin, iv. pp. 402, 403; Frizzi, iv. pp. 117, 118; Piva, i. pp. 21-23.

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his indignation. "It is intolerable," he exclaimed, "that the liberty of Italy should be brought into jeopardy by the headstrong counsels of two young men, and that kingdoms and emperies should be divided by them."¹

Girolamo, with his wife Caterina Sforza, reached Venice on September 9, entering the city, as Alberto Cortesi wrote to Duke Ercole, "with the greatest festivities, jubilations and triumphs, and with a larger demonstration of love in acts, gestures and manners than I have ever seen shown by this people to any other lord or great personage that came to this place."² He was lodged in the Palazzo Estense—the palace afterwards known as the Fondaco dei Turchi which belonged nominally to the Dukes of Ferrara, and was used by the Republic for the reception of their most distinguished guests—the Doge himself escorting him and Caterina thither in state from San Clemente. During Girolamo's visit, the Council of Ten held secret sittings for two days, to hear and discuss his proposals. No records of what passed were kept in the Archives of the Republic, and the Pope's instructions to his nephew were naturally not committed to paper. It seems, however, fairly certain that he set forth the Pope's desire that the Venetians should join in expelling King Ferrante from Italy, and that he made them some kind of promise that they should have Ferrara for their pains, if they succeeded in taking it. He further stipulated that a fleet should be sent to the Pope, to keep Ferrante within his own dominions, and also a small land force. For himself, he only demanded Lugo and Bagnacavallo from the Ferrarese duchy, but intended to

¹ Sigismondo de' Conti, i. p. 118.

² Dispatch of September 10, 1481, quoted in full by Piva, i. pp. 50-52

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obtain a much fuller compensation from the wreck of the Neapolitan Kingdom.¹ The more prudent members of the Council misliked it, and distrusted the Pope, but they were overruled. It was decided to accept the proposal, and Girolamo, loaded with honours, returned to Rome. The Ferrarese orator informed his master that the Count's miserly conduct in giving no gratuities of any kind, and his arrogant manner in accepting the honours that the Republic awarded him, had displeased everybody;² but the Pope was delighted at his nephew's reception and at the success of the mission, and wrote an enthusiastic letter of thanks to the Doge, hinting not obscurely that he would have an opportunity of showing his gratitude.³

In October, Antonio Maria degli Ordelaffi made an unsuccessful attempt to surprise Forlì, with the aid of Galeotto

¹ Cf. Sigismondo de' Conti, i. p. 119; Piva, i. p. 53. In November, 1480, Girolamo had first suggested to Zaccaria Barbaro, the Venetian orator in Rome, his plan for the expulsion of the King of Naples, but Barbaro was told to exhort the Count to keep this dangerous idea to himself. In the following May, it had been rumoured that Girolamo was coming to Venice, and Ercole had instructed Cortesi to keep his eyes open; but the Signoria, seeing that the League was alarmed, had persuaded him to defer his visit. See the documents cited by Piva, i. pp. 45, 48-50. The statement often made that the bargain struck by the high contracting conspirators had for its object the division of the dominions of the Estensi, the Venetians taking Modena and Reggio, and Riario having Ferrara itself, appears to be contradicted by the documentary evidence. The Pope and Riario were equally bent upon the destruction of the King of Naples, while the surrender of Ferrara to Venice was probably the nephew's own addition to his uncle's scheme.

² Dispatch of September 22. Piva, i. p. 53. The Count left Venice on September 16.

³ Brief of September 19, 1481, in the codex of the *Biblioteca Nazionale* at Florence, which Pastor (ii. p. 503, note 2) has shown must have come from the *Archivio Vaticano*. See present work, Appendix II., document 3.

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Manfredi ; while a certain Scrintassa, a man-at-arms in the service of Ercole stationed at Bagnacavallo, lay in wait with a body of armed men to take the Count Girolamo, on his way from Imola to succour the threatened town.

The Pope and the Count were furious, and declared that the shelter that Ercole had given to Antonio Maria was a breach of the agreement concerning Forlì which had been made between the Powers of the League and the Church, to which Ercole had been a party. When Battista Bendedei visited Girolamo, to congratulate him in Ercole's name on his safe return to Rome, the Count cut him short. "Before this affair of Forlì," he said, "I might have believed him ; but now I doubt it. I cannot but wonder that his Excellence should have shown that he makes more account of this Antonio Maria than of me, or of the Signoria of Venice, or of the Holiness of our Lord." He declared that the whole plot had been hatched at Modena, and that the confessions of the conspirators hanged at Forlì had implicated Ercole himself. "Your master," said the Pope to Bendedei, "badly deserves that I should do him any favour ; first, he makes me beg him to pay his tribute, and then pays it when he likes ; secondly, he does not let me collect the tithes from the Jews ; and then, thirdly, he has caused this novelty of Forlì, by giving shelter in Modena and in the Romagna to this Antonio Maria, without having any respect to the Church nor to us, nor to the treaty ratified by all the League and by his Lordship, as you know. By God ! by God ! he will at last make me so angry that I shall give that town of Ferrara to the Signoria of Venice ; I know that they will pay me the tribute willingly, and will not treat me as he does." The ambassador answered that, as to the tribute, the Duke only owed it for this year, and that he would pay

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it promptly and at the usual time ; he would satisfy him also about the Jews ; as to Forlì, his master was innocent. " You can say what you like," interrupted the Pope, " but I am quite certain that your Duke is to blame." He was, however, ready to proceed no further in the matter, on condition that Antonio Maria should henceforth not be allowed to remain in the Duke's dominions.¹

Thoroughly alarmed, Ercole (who had only very indirectly been concerned in the affair of Forlì) arrested Scrintassa and his accomplices, instructed Bendedei to make full satisfaction on every point to the Pope, and even professed himself ready to hand the prisoners over to Count Girolamo, to be examined with torture to manifest the truth, provided that their lives were spared. Girolamo declared that he no longer wanted them for the justification of Ercole, being convinced that he was innocent, but that he must have them in his hands, to be put to death as they deserved. Then Ercole absolutely refused to deliver them up. " They have done nothing against us," he wrote, " to deserve such punishment. So that, since there is no need to send them for our own justification, as the Lord Count justly acknowledges, we must pray his Lordship to excuse us, if we do not send them to have them executed, because we believe that he would not wish us to stain our honour." In answer to further persistence from Girolamo, Ercole declared that he would suffer eternal remorse in his conscience, if he either surrendered the prisoners or put them to death himself.

¹ Dispatches of Battista Bendedei, November 18 and November 25, 1481. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio degli Ambasciatori—Roma*. The prompt aid given by Venice to the Count Girolamo in this affair of Forlì, had further cemented the Papal-Venetian alliance. See brief of November 17 to the Doge, Appendix II., document 4.

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The utmost that he would feel justified in doing would be to sentence Scrintassa, the only real offender in the affair, to perpetual imprisonment.¹

But, in the meanwhile, the Venetians had begun to take aggressive measures on the frontier between the Paduan district and the Polesine, and in December the Powers of the League had formally protested to the Pope concerning the violation of the Ferrarese territory. Before the end of the year, the Venetians were firmly and openly bent upon war; but there were still some weeks of fruitless negotiations. The Cardinal Giuliano had returned from France, and both Ercole and Lorenzo de' Medici pressed him to use his influence with the Pope for peace. Sixtus professed himself ready to arbitrate between the contending parties; but Ercole was convinced that this was only a device to lull the League into false security.² The Duke of Urbino, hitherto potent with Sixtus, worked vigorously to prevent the war. At length his ambassador, Pietro Felice, was refused an audience. "The time has come," quoth Girolamo Riario, "for the Urbinate to understand that there are generals in Italy equal to him, or even better, and that the cause of the Pope and the Church does not depend upon his tergiversation."³ The Venetians were making stupendous preparations for opening the campaign, and all the Powers of the League were arming.

"His Beatitude," wrote Ercole, "is being dragged into war, without perceiving it. If he is such a lover of peace as he says, he will find himself deluded by his Venetians, and

¹ *Minute Ducali per Roma a Battista Bendedei*, December 4, 1481, January 16, February 7, 1482. Archivio di Modena, *loc. cit.*

² Letter of March 26 to Giovanni Bentivoglio. Dallari, p. 70.

³ Sigismondo de' Conti, i. p. 121. Cf. document 5 in Appendix II to present work.

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he will not have prevented, as he could have done, such a conflagration that we see is rising in Italy, that may God grant that it be not the ruin of this miserable Italy and of all Christendom.”¹

At the beginning of April, Roberto da San Severino, who had broken with Lodovico Sforza and had been expelled from the Duchy of Milan, was appointed commander of the Venetian land forces for the enterprise, with the title of Lieutenant-General and the position which the late Bartolommeo Colleoni had held. The Duke of Urbino had previously been appointed commander-in-chief of the armies of the League—Naples, Milan and Florence—for the defence of Ferrara, Ercole's own position being that of Lieutenant-General. The Marquis of Mantua and Giovanni Bentivoglio were naturally on the same side. To the cause of Venice and the Pope adhered the Republic of Siena, the Duke of Savoy and the Marquis of Montferrat, the Rossi of Parma (who had been stirred up to rebellion against Milan and were hard pressed by the ducal troops under Gian Jacopo Trivulzio), and (a little later) the Republic of Genoa. Thus when war actually broke out, practically the whole of Italy was involved, on one side or the other.

Hostilities began from the South. In the middle of April, Duke Alfonso of Calabria marched into the States of the Church, and demanded a passage for his army to move up for the defence of his sister and her husband in Ferrara; simultaneously, he sent troops to occupy Marino which was held by his allies, the Colonna. On April 18, the Pope refused the passage, and in a brief to the King ordered him to withdraw his forces, lest men should say that he was

¹ *Minute Ducali per Roma a Battista Bendedei*, February 17, 1482. Archivio di Modena, *loc. cit.*

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going to make war upon the Church of God. For the peace of Italy, he said, he would himself write again to the Duke of Ferrara and to the Doge, and he urged his Majesty to exhort the Duke to deal with the Venetians in a friendly spirit. On the same day he wrote to Ercole, as though he were the aggressor, urging him for the sake of Italy to lay aside his warlike counsels and keep the peace.¹

But war had already been decreed in the Venetian Senate, and, on the last day of April, the invasion of the Duke's territory began. Roberto da San Severino crossed the Tartaro, and advanced upon Mellara, which was taken in a few days. On May 2, the Doge, Giovanni Mocenigo, formally announced the declaration of this "most just and most honest war," and the standard of San Marco was solemnly consigned to Roberto's representative. "When it was proclaimed," writes Malipiero, "there was seen such great satisfaction among the people, that never has a war been undertaken with such general consent." All spoils taken from the subjects of the enemy were to be regarded as private booty. "Many of the people without pay are following the army and the fleet, by land and by water, moved partly by the hope of gain, partly by the hatred that they bear to the city of Ferrara."² Alike by land and water, the Venetian forces were divided; one fleet under Vettor Soranzo was to work along the Neapolitan coasts, another, the more potent, under Damiano Moro and Cristoforo da Mula, also divided into two, was to enter the Po by the Bocca di Corbonaro and the Bocca delle Fornaci and assail Ferrara. The other portion of the land army

¹ Briefs of April 18, 1482, in the codex of the *Biblioteca Nazionale*, ff. 217-218. See Appendix II., document 6.

² Malipiero, *Annali Veneti*, pp. 257, 258.

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under Roberto Malatesta—who was bitterly jealous of the honours conferred on Roberto da San Severino, and hinted that, unless more respect was paid to his dignity as Captain-General, he might not be able to take the field—was to operate in Romagna, assailing the Ferrarese territory from that side and keeping the passage closed to the forces of the Duke of Calabria.

On May 12, all the ambassadors of the League went together to the Pope, with a full statement of their case in a form which amounted to a declaration of war. When it had been read to him, Sixtus said that the things alleged therein were worthy of the greatest consideration, and asked for the document, in order better to examine all the parts of it. The ambassadors answered that they could not wait for any reply, their commission being instantly to leave the city. The Pope expressed his regret; they kissed his foot, and departed with his benediction. Two days later, Battista Bendedei and Aniello Arcamone, the Neapolitan ambassador, left Rome together and got to Marino for supper, “where we were right gladly welcomed by those Lords of the Colonna and by the Magnifico Andrea da Gennaro, the royal commissary.”¹

The position of the Pope was, to say the least of it, a peculiar one. He regarded himself as assailed by Naples because of his fidelity to the Venetian alliance; but the royal attack had simply forestalled his own designs upon the Kingdom, and the immediate occasion of the war had been, if not his own direct permission, at least his nephew's

¹ Dispatches of Battista Bendedei, May 12 and May 22, 1482, the former inclosing a copy of the document that was read to the Pope. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio degli Ambasciatori—Roma*. The Ferrarese orator accompanied Aniello to Naples, and then returned to Rome for a while as a private person.

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instigation to the Republic to assail Ferrara, a city of the Roman Church. "Your Duke," he said to the Bishop of Modena, Monsignor Boccaccio, "has scorned my paternal admonitions; therefore I have been compelled to allow the Venetians to vindicate their rights by any means."¹ At the same time, he did not consider himself at war with the other Powers of the League. He could assure the Duke of Milan, a few months later (before his own change of front), that his friendly disposition towards him was not in the least altered by these perturbations of Italy; while he was positively edified by the conduct of the Duke of Urbino, who, in his agreement with the League, had specially stipulated that he would by no means do anything whatever against the Church.²

In the meanwhile, the main force of the Republic under Roberto da San Severino and Damiano Moro was being hurled against Ferrara itself, by land and water. In a few preliminary skirmishes the Ferrarese gained some trifling advantage—but the forces opposed to them were crushing and overwhelming in their superiority of numbers. Adria was taken and burned in May; Comacchio surrendered without resistance. Alike in the Polesine and in Romagna, the nobles of the Ferrarese Court, especially Niccolò da Correggio and Teofilo Calcagnino, showed much gallantry and devotion; while the barbarities committed by the Dalmatians and Slavonians in the Venetian service, men used only to warfare with Turks, excited general indignation. The beautiful villas of the Ferrarese were sacked and burned, the country laid waste on all sides, so far as the

¹ Dispatch of G. A. Boccaccio, May 31, 1482. Balan, v. p. 297.

² Briefs of November 7 and October 3, 1482. *Archivio Vaticano*, xxxix. 15, ff. 180-182, 97.

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claws of the winged Lion could clutch. The great struggle was along the Po, where the Duke of Urbino with the forces of the League, including a strong Milanese contingent under Trivulzio and aided by the Marquis of Mantua, who was endeavouring to support the Ferrarese cause without definitely breaking with Venice, contested the Venetian advance stubbornly. Before the end of May, Roberto's army had encamped before Ficarolo, and the Venetian fleet, under Damiano Moro, arrived at the point where the Po divides and goes towards Ferrara.

This conjunction of the fleet and army of the enemy struck terror into the hearts of the Ferrarese. Panic and famine seized upon the city. The people had thrown all the blame for their sufferings upon the hated Trotti, Paolo Antonio and Jacopo and their brothers, to whose conduct and policy the whole war was ascribed. "Such was their cupidity and avarice," writes Caleffini, "that I believe that they would have crucified Christ another time to get money; and the Duke saw and heard nothing but what they wanted, and if any one of them was ill, the Duke was always with them, and it was thought that these rascals had bewitched him." To appease the popular fury, Ercole had deprived Jacopo of his office of Judge of the Sages, sending him as ambassador to Milan; but the mere sight of another brother, Brandeligi, with the Duchess at one of the windows of the Castello, raised a tumult which the Duke and the ambassadors of the League had only quelled with the utmost difficulty.¹ Ercole now tried to allay the alarm by appointing six Ferrarese citizens as *Savii della Guerra*, with

¹ Caleffini, *Croniche del Duca Ercole*, ff. 40-41v. Jacopo Trotti had married a daughter of Folco da Villanova, Leonello's favourite, and had inherited his palace in the Borgo Nuovo,

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ample authority for seeing to the fortifications and victualling of the city. Leonora imported a hermit from Bologna, who preached eight times in the Duomo to an immense audience, exhorting the people to bear patiently all the sufferings of the war, and to be loyal to the House of Este and their Duke. He is said to have promised, by working a miracle, to break the Venetian array under Ficarolo, and to have led out a solemn procession towards the camp of the League, with the intention of preaching a sermon to the generals of both armies ; but the Duke of Urbino promptly sent him about his business.¹

Stupendous was the prolonged struggle round the little fortress of Ficarolo, to the reduction of which the fiercest efforts of the united Venetian fleet and army were directed, while from Stellata the opposed forces of the League harassed the besiegers with their artillery, and flooded their camp. The Duke of Urbino boasted that he would never expect to be treated as a general again, if the enemy that year should pluck this fig.² Ercole was present at the earlier phases of the siege ; but he was soon compelled to return to his capital, because of its critical condition. At first the Urbinate's boast seemed about to be justified. A bastion of the Venetians was captured by the troops of the League, two of Roberto's condottieri, Antonio da Marsano and Bartolommeo Falcero, being among the prisoners. Ercole demanded that they should be given into his hands, with the intention of conciliating the Venetians by releasing them unconditionally ; Lodovico Sforza, however, declared that they were Trivulzio's prisoners, and must be sent to

¹ Sanudo, *Vite de' Duchi di Venezia*, col. 1218.

² Sigismondo de' Conti, i. p. 125.

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Milan.¹ The fighting was incessant, but less deadly than the fever and pestilence that set in, both on the ships and in the camps. The Duke of Urbino broke down; Damiano Moro and the *provveditore* with the land army, Antonio Loredan, both sick to death, went back to Venice. After five weeks' siege, the fortress was taken by storm at the end of June, in the sight of the forces of the League at Stellata, which were powerless to aid.² All the heroic little garrison perished; but, what with the fighting and the pestilence, the place had cost the Venetians several thousand men. In the light of his subsequent declarations, it may be noticed that the Pope professed the utmost satisfaction at the news of the fall of Ficarolo.³

The whole of the Ferrarese territory beyond the Po now fell into the hands of the enemy. On August 14, the Venetians appeared before the walls of Rovigo, of which the citadel was held by Count Niccolò Ariosti, who was then ducal captain of the district, with a mere handful of men, the greater part of them sick; resistance being useless, the citizens forced the Count to surrender the town. All the Ferrarese forces were now withdrawn from the Po, for the defence of Ferrara itself.

¹ Letter nominally from the Duke of Milan to Trivulzio, June 8, 1482, in Rosmini, *Vita di G. J. Trivulzio*, ii. p. 93.

² Sanudo, *op. cit.*, col. 1219, makes the Duke of Urbino himself a witness, but he had already left the seat of war. Cf. Sigismondo de' Conti, i. pp. 128, 129, and Baldi, *Vita e fatti di Federigo da Montefeltro*, 2nd edition, iii. p. 216.

³ Brief of July 6, 1482, to the Doge of Venice, in the codex of the *Biblioteca Nazionale*, f. 313. In the same brief, Sixtus assents to the Doge's request to make Federigo da San Severino (destined to be the deadliest foe of his own nephew!) a Cardinal. Savonarola in 1496, preaching upon Amos in S. Maria del Fiore, contrasted the obstinate defence of Ficarolo with the Italian collapse on the invasion of Charles VIII. (Cf. Villari and Casanova, *Scelta di prediche e scritti di Fra Girolamo Savonarola*, p. 223.)

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Hardly less disastrous for the League had the war proved elsewhere. In June, the Duke of Urbino had suggested that Giovanni Bentivoglio and Galeotto Manfredi should carry hostilities into the enemy's country, and make Girolamo Riario taste "of those fruits which, with his ambition and malignity, he has ever striven to induce the Pope to serve to others, who desire to remain in peace," by devastating Imola; in August, Antonio Maria degli Ordelaffi made an attack upon Forlì. But, though Bentivoglio wrote to assure Ercole that he was even then mounting to horse for the latter enterprise, "in the name of God and the glorious St. George," nothing came of it.¹ The Florentines alone had been comparatively successful; led by their condottieri, Costanzo Sforza and Niccolò Vitelli, their troops had driven the *papalini* out of Città di Castello. But, worst of all, the Neapolitans had been defeated.

At first the royal army had had things all its own way, and had threatened the Eternal City itself with impunity. From his stronghold at Marino, Lorenzo Colonna, continually reinforced from Naples and by the Savelli, had made hostile excursions up to the very walls of Rome. Alfonso himself had appeared in May; and the Turks, whom he had taken into his service after the fall of Otranto, ravaged the Campagna. A powerful Neapolitan fleet threatened the coast of the Papal States; the promised Venetian ships still lingered. Girolamo's troops, encamped near the Lateran, did not dare to advance against the invaders, but broke into the Vatican, profaned the churches; a state of anarchy

¹ Dallari, pp. 90, 91. The Pope had sent an emphatic brief to the Bolognese, bidding them abstain from hostilities, "especially against those whom you ought rather to guard and protect, if you wish to do your duty towards the Holy Roman Church" (Brief of June 11, *MS. cit.*, f. 277).

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seemed imminent ; the Pope was terrified ; Giuliano della Rovere and the ambassadors of Ferdinand and Isabella advised him to make peace. But at length, in response to urgent appeals from the Pope and Girolamo, the Venetian Senate ordered Roberto Malatesta to leave Romagna and set out for Rome, with all his army.¹ On July 23, he arrived in Rome, acclaimed by high and low as the deliverer of the Church : " This is he that shall deliver Israel," shouted the crowd, as, handsome and smiling, a magnificent figure in his glittering armour, he rode through the streets to confer with the Pontiff. A few days later, the Venetian forces arrived, and the banners of the Pope and San Marco floated together over the city.

Malatesta promptly took the field against the royal forces. Alfonso retreated before him, and took up a strong position with his artillery near the Pontine Marshes, in the so-called Campo Morto, between Velletri and Nettuno. Here, on August 21, he was assailed by Malatesta and completely defeated, himself only saved from capture by the valour of his Turkish followers, who fell in heaps protecting his flight, and by the heroism of Antonio Piccolomini, Duke of Amalfi and nephew of Pius II, who charged the victorious forces at the head of his squadron, and kept them at bay until Alfonso had made good his escape. Girolamo Riario kept out of the fighting, on the plea of guarding the standards. There was a triumphal entry into the city,

¹ On May 19, Vettor Soranzo received orders from Venice to move his fleet to attack the Kingdom. The Republic professed the utmost reluctance to taking Malatesta away from the enterprise of Ferrara, but at length, June 8, gave him the order to go with two squadrons, and a month later sent all its troops from Romagna to follow him to Rome, leaving a small guard of mercenaries to defend Imola and Forlì (Piva, i. pp. 95-104).

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and a march through Rome, in the spirit of an imperial triumph of old; the captured banners and cannons were carried in procession, with a long line of prisoners, including the Duke of Amalfi (whom the Pope entertained in his own palace, and then released unconditionally) and many of the noblest of the Kingdom. The Venetians boasted that they had given the Pope such a triumph that Rome had never seen the like for many centuries.

Flushed with victory, the exultant Sixtus addressed a long letter to the Emperor and the other Potentates of Christendom. "God, who is the searcher of hearts," he wrote, "knoweth that we desired nothing more than peace and the unity of all Christians, in order to provide for the perpetual salvation of the faithful." He laid stress upon the ingratitude of Ferrante, represented himself as suddenly and undeservedly assailed. God had vindicated the justice of his cause. Let them join with him against the common enemy of the Christian Faith, and aid the Church against her foes and rebels, who are hindering this most salutary undertaking.¹ The victory of Campo Morto is celebrated still in the Cappella Sistina in the remarkable fresco, usually ascribed to Piero di Cosimo, of the destruction of the hosts of Egypt in the Red Sea.

Suddenly, at the beginning of September, Roberto Malatesta, who was besieging the fortress of Cava, fell sick. He had been slightly wounded in the battle, and fever set in. The Pope was wild with anxiety, sent message after message to inquire after his health, and dispatched his own physician to attend him. Carried to Rome in a dying state, Roberto died on September 10—Sixtus himself coming to

¹ Brief of August 25, 1482. *Archivio Vaticano*, xxxix. 15, ff. 1-3. It is printed in Raynaldus, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, under 1482.

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his bedside, to administer the last sacraments of the Church to the man to whom he owed the preservation of his States, and upon whom he had been building up a dream of greater triumphs in the future. The next day, in the Consistory, he legitimated the dead hero's sons, and announced his intention of investing them with the vicariate of Rimini under his protection.¹ There were dark whispers of poison, of a deadly sequel to Count Girolamo's jealousy for the victory of Campo Morto; there can, however, be little doubt that Roberto had died from purely natural causes.

On the same day, September 10, the Captain-General of the League, Federigo da Montefeltro, died at Ferrara in the Duke's rooms in the garden of the palace. Shortly before his death, he had striven to bring about peace, and had been in negotiation with the Pope and the Cardinal Giuliano to that end.² He is said to have been cut to the heart, when he heard of the victory of Campo Morto, and his last hours were embittered by the belief that Roberto Malatesta intended to despoil his heir, Guidobaldo, of the Duchy of Urbino. To Isabella da Montefeltro Malatesta, Federigo's daughter and Roberto's wife, were announced simultaneously the deaths of father and husband.³ Guidobaldo was then a mere child, and the care of Urbino's lordship devolved upon his uncle, Ottaviano da Montefeltro, a subtle politician of ambiguous reputation. To him the Pope wrote, expressing great grief at the death of the late Duke,

¹ Briefs to the Council and Commune of Rimini, and to the Doge of Venice, September 11, 1482. *Archivio Vaticano*, xxxix. 15, ff. 43-46.

² Brief of September 3, 1482. *Ibid.*, ff. 32, 33.

³ Sigismondo de' Conti, i. p. 145. Zambotto (f. 104v) describes the lying in state of Federigo at Ferrara. The usual statement, that he died at Bologna, is erroneous.

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and demanding free passage through his States for the troops which, in consequence of the death of Roberto, he was sending for the defence and security of Rimini. He exhorted him to train up the little Guidobaldo in every virtuous disposition, that he might be a worthy son of such a father, and especially to keep him upon good terms with the Apostolic See.¹

Alike on the Po and in the Campagna, disease and pestilence ravaged the armies of both parties, and carried off victims in thousands. Piero Maria de' Rossi, Damiano Moro and Antonio Loredan were but three of the more illustrious dead. Roberto da San Severino retired sick to Padua, and Ercole's own health gave way.

In the autumn, the Venetian Senate decided to renew the attack upon Ferrara, by water and land, with all their powers. Roberto had recovered his health, and, stirred up with the promise of Modena and Reggio if he were successful, he prepared to carry hostilities right up to the walls of Ferrara itself. The Venetian forces, by land and sea, had been recalled from Rome and the Neapolitan coast. Vettor Soranzo, who had taken the place of the dead Damiano Moro, approached the shores of Argenta with his fleet, and threatened the Bastia of Zaniolo, with a view of securing the Po di Primaro.² Sigismondo d' Este, who was in command at Argenta, suddenly appeared to the rescue, with a mixed force of Ferrarese and Milanese. At first he drove back the invaders, but, unexpectedly assailed by the

¹ Briefs of September 21 and October 3. *Archivio Vaticano*, xxxix. 15, ff. 64, 97.

² It will be remembered that the course of the Po has been considerably altered since the sixteenth century. The Po di Primaro then joined the Po di Volano at the Punta di San Giorgio, close to the walls of Ferrara.

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light-armed Albanians, he suffered ultimately a complete defeat, and fled back to Argenta with a handful of men. The Venetians took seven hundred prisoners, including Ugo da San Severino (one of the condottieri of the Duke of Milan) and Niccolò da Correggio. These they sent to Venice, paraded in triumph through the Piazza di San Marco, and kept rigorously imprisoned.

Prompt succour came from Milan in the person of Gian Jacopo Trivulzio, in whom Leonora and Ercole had the greatest confidence. He was probably the best captain they could have found, to defend what remained of the duchy, and they were profuse in their gratitude to the Duke of Milan.¹ Trivulzio promptly strengthened the fortifications of Bondeno and Argenta, and was vigorous in organizing the defence. But dissensions soon broke out. With all his undoubted valour and military skill, Trivulzio was self-sufficient and choleric, could brook no opposition, and would not work with the other Milanese condottieri, who arrived upon the scene a little later. He wrangled with Sforza Secondo, an illegitimate brother of Lodovico, and openly showed his contempt for the soldiership of Sigismondo d' Este. "Let us remind you," wrote the Duke of Milan, or Lodovico in his name, "that, since the most illustrious Lord Messer Sigismondo is there with the authority that he has, you must pay him fitting reverence, and generally comport yourself towards him with such discretion and modesty as we are certain you will use, and in the same way with the Magnifico Sforza, in order that it may be manifest that you are bent upon nothing save the benefit of that most illustrious Lord the Duke."² While

¹ Cf. documents in Rosmini, *op. cit.*, ii. pp. 98, 99.

² Letter of November 28, 1482. Rosmini, *op. cit.*, ii. p. 100.

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the captains were thus factious against each other, the position of Ferrara grew every day more critical. Another Venetian fleet appeared upon the Po, and moved up to Papozze, preparing to advance to Pontelagoscuro, and to effect the passage of the land army.

But elsewhere the situation was rapidly changing. A month previously, in answer to an appeal from the Duke of Milan, the Pope had coldly answered that if Ercole had hearkened to his paternal exhortations and admonitions, he would have stood in no need of help from Milan or elsewhere, but that all Italy would have been enjoying peace and quiet.¹ The victory of Campo Morto had, however, produced no permanent effect upon the campaign. After the death of Roberto Malatesta, the Venetians had withdrawn their forces, the *provveditore* Pietro Diedo declaring that he could not remain without leave from the Senate, and the soldiers complaining of deferred payment. The Duke of Calabria drew fresh reinforcements from the Regno, and prepared to take the field again; the Colonnese and their allies renewed their alarms and excursions, and from their fortress of Palombara their foraging parties advanced even to the gates of Rome. The Pope grew alarmed for his own safety. His first impulse was to join with the Venetians in an attempt to bring Duke René of Lorraine into Italy, to renew the Angevin claims upon the throne of Naples.² Within a few weeks—a characteristic political

¹ Brief of October 27, 1482. *Archivio Vaticano*, xxxix. 15, f. 158 (published in part in Raynaldus).

² See Appendix II., document 8. To this step, the Pope and Venice had been led by Girolamo Riario. René II of Lorraine was the son of Yolande, the daughter of René of Anjou, the former pretender to the crown of Naples. He had been in the Venetian service in 1480. Cf. Romanin, iv. pp. 393, 394.

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somersault, which his greater nephew was to imitate in the following century—he completely changed his front. He found himself threatened from the north with a renewal of the Council of Basle—this being, in Mr. Armstrong's phrase, "the ecclesiastical penalty of temporal ambition"¹—and realized that the Venetians were bent solely upon the acquisition of Ferrara. The orators of Lorenzo de' Medici and of Milan urged him to make peace before it was too late, and the ambassadors of the Catholic Sovereigns of Spain put on still stronger pressure. The Cardinal Giuliano threw his influence into the same scale. Girolamo Riario held out for a while, and warned the Venetians of what was in progress. The Republic instructed its ambassador, Francesco Diedo, to dissuade the Pope from negotiations with the King of Naples, and to promise the aid of Duke René against him. But Girolamo was bought by the splendid promises of the ambassadors of the League—which are said to have included (alas, for the Pope's good faith!) the investiture of the fief of Rimini, the patrimony of the dead Malatesta.² And Sixtus gave way.

Seeing what was on foot, the Venetians resolved to push on the war with the utmost vigour, if possible to make the acquisition of Ferrara an accomplished fact, before the Pope's tergiversation became definite and irrevocable. On November 20, their army crossed the Po at Pontelagoscuro by a bridge of boats. Trivulzio drove back the advanced guard, but was forced to retreat before overwhelming numbers, burning the fortifications on the Ferrarese side,

¹ *Lorenzo de' Medici*, p. 195.

² Sanudo, *op. cit.*, col. 1225; Pastor, ii. p. 521. A little later, early in December, the Venetians offered Faenza, Lugo and Bagnacavallo to Riario, to keep the Pope in their alliance (Piva, i. p. 125), but it was then too late.

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destroying what of the guns and ammunition he could not save. The enemy plundered and ravaged all the country round, approached the walls of the city itself, and planted the standard of San Marco in the Barco. They were not, however, prepared to venture upon an attack, nor completely to invest the city. Sigismondo and Trivulzio held the Certosa, Marco Pio defended Belfiore, and succeeded in checking their advance.

Ercole had completely broken down in health ; and the whole care of the State devolved upon Leonora, who rose to the occasion, and displayed heroic courage and fortitude. She summoned the gentlemen and people of Ferrara to meet her in the cortile of the palace, where, supported by the ambassadors of the League, she exhorted them in the Duke's name to persevere in their fidelity ; they need have no fear, she said, because of the passage of Roberto and his army, for forces and provisions were on the way from all the powers of the League ; the Duke was ready to lay down his life and state for their preservation, and both he and she relied absolutely upon their faith. The Duchess spoke so sweetly, says Zambotto, who was present, that she made all the people weep. Amidst shouts of "Diamante, Diamante," Ambrosio de' Contrari and Francesco di Rinaldo Ariosti expressed the gratitude and devotion of all classes ; but Rinaldo Costabili spoke of the long fidelity of the Ferrarese and the oppression that they had suffered from the bad government of ducal officials, and urged the Duchess to let the people see the Duke himself, "because many feared that they were being deceived and given into the hands of others." A burst of applause from the crowd greeted the suggestion. The Duchess then had all the doors thrown open, and let the throng pass through the

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room where the Duke lay upon a bed, "with a long robe, with his beard long, and he could hardly speak or open his eyes." For more than an hour they passed through, touching his hand, going in at one door and out at another in a continuous stream, many weeping and uttering words of consolation. At last, seeing him worn out, and observing that some people came through more than once, Leonora had the doors closed.¹ The same afternoon, headed by Rinaldo d' Este and Francesco Ariosti, the people came into the piazza in arms, and professed their readiness to sally out against the enemy in the Barco ; but the Duchess forbade it.

On the same day as the passage of the Venetians, November 20, Giovanni Bentivoglio wrote to Ercole, in great haste and exultation, that that morning a *cameriere segreto* of the Cardinal Gonzaga had arrived at Bologna, who came from Rome, and, under pretext of going to Mantua, was to announce to Ercole that the peace would be concluded at Rome, and to encourage him to be of good heart and defend himself vigorously, because the Pope desired his preservation and that of his Duchy. A few days later Francesco Belvisi, a servant of the Cardinal Giuliano, arrived at Bologna, and came on at once to Ferrara, to assure the Duke of the Pope's good dispositions towards him and his State.² All now depended upon gaining time

¹ Zambotto, ff. 108-109. "Io steti sempre in uno cantone a vedere tale visitatione." The officials aimed at in Costabili's speech are obviously the Trotti. A few days later, in consequence of fresh representations, they were secretly sent out of Ferrara and all the laws ascribed to them were cancelled, the Duchess saving their property by having it conveyed to the Castle as though it had been confiscated. Caleffini, *Croniche del Duca Ercole*, f. 44v.

² Dallari, pp. 99, 100.

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and supplies, to enable the Ferrarese to hold out until these "good dispositions" of the Sovereign Pontiff should develop into acts. With a view to staying in the meanwhile the Venetian onslaught, Ercole sent Andrea de' Zoboli to Venice, under the pretext of asking for terms. Introduced to the Council of Ten, Messer Andrea expressed the regret of his Excellence of Ferrara that anything that he had done could have offended Venice, and his desire to be "a good and devoted son of that Signoria." The only reply that he could get was that the Duke should have been of this mind before the war, and it was coupled with a peremptory intimation to himself to return instantly to his master.¹ This was on November 27. On the following day, a truce was proclaimed in Rome between the Duke of Calabria and the Pope.

The position of Ferrara was critical in the extreme. The Bastia of Zaniolo was taken at the beginning of December, and Ercole had himself carried through the piazza from the palace to the Castello Novo, ostensibly to be farther away from the noise made by the troops, who passed out every morning to skirmish in the Barco; in reality, to escape, if the city were taken.² The ducal children had already been sent for safety to Modena. The Venetians were making the most magnificent offers to the nobles and people of the city, if they spontaneously surrendered Ferrara, and there were traitors within the walls.³ Next

¹ Romanin, iv. pp. 408, 409.

² Zambotto, f. III.

³ One of these was Francesco di Rinaldo Ariosti, to whom the Ten had promised immense rewards, of which the palace of the Trotti was the least part; others of the faction opposed to the Trotti appear also to have been implicated (Piva, ii. pp. 20, 21). His treachery was never discovered, and he enjoyed the confidence of the Duke until his death.

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to the defence of the city itself, all the efforts of Trivulzio and the other captains were devoted to holding Argenta on the one side, Bondeno and Stellata on the other—the possession of these two fortresses keeping the passage open by which supplies and provisions could be brought from the districts of Modena and Reggio. Reinforcements were hurried forward from Milan and Bologna; and Sforza, who had been deputed to guard Argenta, surprised and cut up a party of Albanians and Slavonians. The main body of the Venetians with Roberto himself had not pushed their advance, but lay comparatively inactive at Francolino and Pontelagoscuro.

The condition of the city was terrible, and the sufferings of the Ferrarese grew intense. A large, luxurious and pleasure-loving population, which had never had more serious experience of war than the comparatively slight tumults at the end of Borso's reign and the abortive attempt of Niccolò di Leonello, found itself cooped up within the walls, decimated with pestilence, racked with famine and privation. Homeless fugitives from the captured towns, starving peasants from the contado, wandered through the streets with their families, begging for food, so wasted that they seemed like painted deaths.¹ The supplies which Leonora had obtained from Modena and Reggio, at the risk of a revolution in those cities, were altogether inadequate even for the needs of the soldiers alone. Ferrara was only saved from destruction by the Pope taking the final plunge that left the passage free for the Duke of Calabria to come to her aid.

¹ Sanudo, *op. cit.*, col. 1224; Sigismondo de' Conti, i. p. 132. The two surviving mistresses of Niccolò III., Cammilla dalla Tavola and Anna de' Roberti, were carried off by the pestilence.

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Apart from considerations of policy and the necessities of his own position, Sixtus probably felt genuine remorse at the disastrous results of his iniquitous diplomacy and conduct towards the Ferrarese State. "He was deeply moved also," writes Sigismondo de' Conti, "by the infamy of the thing itself, the Cardinals often warning him not to let it be inscribed on his tomb that he had betrayed Ferrara to the Venetians into slavery."¹ On December 12, the Pope gave in his adhesion to the League of Naples, Milan and Florence. The principal conditions were the defence of Ferrara and the restoration of his lost territories to the Duke; a mutual restitution of all the places taken in the war; a twenty years' league or federation, in which the Venetians could enter, if they wished, within the space of thirty days; a *stipendio* of 40,000 golden ducats to Girolamo Riario, as condottiere of the League for three years. On the following day Sixtus went in solemn procession to the newly erected church of Santa Maria della Virtù—that exquisite little monument of the Quattrocento to be made glowing in the following century with the frescoes of Raphael and Baldassare Peruzzi—and gave it the name of Santa Maria della Pace in honour of the event.² The Cardinal of Mantua, Francesco Gonzaga, was appointed Papal Legate, to bear the tidings of peace to the beleaguered city.

The advent of his illustrious and most reverend Lordship was heralded by a shower of papal briefs—to the Government of Bologna, to the citizens and people of Ferrara, to Duke Ercole, to the orators of the League at Ferrara, to Giovanni Bentivoglio, to the people of Reggio, to the people

¹ Sigismondo de' Conti, i. p. 176.

² Pastor, ii. p. 522.

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of Modena. To judge from the language of the Holy Father, he has only just heard of the danger of Ferrara, has instantly joined the League for its defence, and summoned the Doge of Venice to desist from the attack, to restore what he has taken, and embrace the peace. He is greatly consoled by the loyal aid of the Powers of the League and by what he has heard of the tried fidelity of the Ferrarese to their Duke, whom, together with his subjects, he has taken under his special protection. Let people and Duke have full trust in his Legate, who will console them with spiritual and temporal favours, and will prove to the Duke that he, the Pope, is entirely bent upon his welfare and the reintegration of his State. "Thou shalt have salvation from the Lord," he assures Ercole, "and the counsels of them that work iniquity shall not prevail against us." If the enemy do not desist from hostilities, all the powers of the Roman Church shall be turned against them. Let the people of Modena and Reggio, too, keep faithful and loyal to their Prince, "whereby you will consult your own peace, and obtain our benediction and special grace, and that of the Apostolic See."¹

On December 13, Fra Cherubino da Spoleto, "a man of great sanctity," announced the peace from the pulpit of the Duomo. There was a solemn service there on the 17th, when, in the presence of the Duchess and the ambassadors of the League, the friar exhorted the people to thank God upon their knees, while the banner of the Pope was waved over their heads. The banner was then carried in procession through the streets; bells rang, guns were

¹ Briefs of December 13 and 14, 1482. *Archivio Vaticano*, xxxix. 15, ff. 244-248, 252, 253. See present work, Appendix II., documents 9, 10 and 11.

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fired from each fortress ; but the gates of the city were kept closed, lest the troops of the League quartered in the Borgo Leone should come in to sack and loot, while Sigismondo and Rinaldo d' Este stayed on horseback in the piazza, to prevent the soldiers in the town from showing their enthusiasm in a similar way. The people would have sacked the palace of the Trotti, but were forbidden on the grounds that it was being prepared for the reception of the Cardinal Legate. When the procession was over, papal standards were hoisted in the piazza, on the highest tower of the Castello Vecchio and over the Castello Novo, where Duke Ercole still lay on his bed of sickness.¹

“ In the name of God,” wrote the Duchess Leonora to the Ancients of the City of Reggio, “ to whom should every grace be referred, we can now hope that we shall be delivered from our great anguish and distress, inasmuch as we shall have immediately upon our side the potent arm of Holy Church ; we shall have also the presence of the most illustrious Lord Duke of Calabria, our brother, with his power, besides other succour from our most triumphant and serene League. Rejoice, therefore, together and with us at these tidings, giving thanks to God for so great a benefit, and console yourselves with making modest merriment.”²

Elsewhere, too, there were wild rejoicings. At Bologna, with clashing of bells and firing of guns, blazing fires were lighted throughout the city ; the prisons were thrown open, the shops sacked. As for the Magnifico Messer Giovanni Bentivoglio, never had Ercole's agent seen him

¹ Zambotto, ff. 112, 112v. ; Caleffini, *MS. cit.*, f. 45.

² G. B. Venturi, *Relazioni dei Governatori di Reggio al Duca Ercole I*, p. 250. Leonora was a deeply religious woman, and giving thanks to God was, for her, no mere formality.

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so merry and jovial in his life.¹ The peace was solemnly proclaimed in Rome on Christmas Eve. Cordially welcomed by Pontiff and people, the once hated and dreaded Alfonso of Calabria appeared in the Eternal City, received the blessed sword from the hands of the Pope, and started with his army for Ferrara. At the beginning of January, the Cardinal of Mantua made his state entry into the city in the name of the Pope, escorted from Bologna by the Bentivoglio.

In the meanwhile, Sigismondo de' Conti—who lives for us still in his History of his own times, and whose stately old age was to be eternalized in Raphael's Madonna of Foligno—had been sent from the Pope to pacify the Venetians. He was the bearer of a brief from Sixtus to the Doge and a letter from the Cardinals, in which the Venetians were urged to accede to "this holy and desirable unity," to lay aside their arms and desist from the siege of Ferrara, in which case the Pope pledged himself to see them satisfied, if they had any cause of complaint against the Duke. Sigismondo himself spoke, drew a piteous picture of Ercole's plight, assured the Senate that he had learned to his cost to know the dignity and glory of Venice, and that he would diligently cultivate their friendship for the future.²

But the Venetians remained steadfast. They declared that they had only entered into the war at the exhortation of the Pope himself, and that they would not withdraw

¹ See letter of Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti to Ercole, of December 20. Dallari, p. 102, note 1. Giovanni Bentivoglio, a fortnight previously, had been negotiating with the Venetians to be taken into their pay and under their protection (Piva, i. p. 124).

² Sigismondo de' Conti, i. pp. 158-164. The brief, *Ut primum ad apicem Summi Apostolatus*, is printed in Raynaldus, in Malipiero's *Annali* and elsewhere. It is dated December 11, in the *Archivio Vaticano*, xxxix. 15, ff. 239-241.

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now, after all the blood and labour they had spent, now that victory was within their grasp. If the Pope used arms or censures against them, he would throw all Italy into most parlous wars, of which he would not see the end. They protested that they alone had delivered the Eternal City, and given the Pope such a triumph as Rome had not seen for centuries. While professing the utmost confidence in the Pope's zeal for the honour of God and the peace of the flock, in the sincerity of the Cardinals and the most serene Sovereigns of Castile, they warn him against those who, when they were in peace, strove to drag them into war, and, now that they are at war, cannot bear to see them victorious. They remind the Pope of their services to Christ and the Church. Let him suffer the Duke of Ferrara to have the fate he has brought upon himself; he has chosen war, let him have it. "Suffer this Ferrarese Duke to experience that lot which he himself has preferred; he has desired war, let him have war; he has despised your Beatitude, he has scorned your offers; let him receive the fruit that his pertinacity has merited. Surely we shall not be, either in deserts or in dignity, inferior tributaries of your Beatitude than the Duke of Ferrara. We do not know what this man has ever done for Christendom; if we related the great things that we have done, we should be censured for arrogance."¹

¹ Sigismondo de' Conti, i. pp. 166-173. A violent rejoinder from the Pope is given in the same volume, pp. 413-419, and also in the *Archivio Vaticano, Politica Varia*, vii. ff. 294-308, with a somewhat different text. Following it in the same codex (ff. 309-330), undated, is a curious document (originally discovered by Pastor, ii. p. 523, note 3), defending the Count Girolamo, and defying the Venetians to prove that he ever instigated them to assail Ferrara. The controversy excited some interest in England, and Caxton printed the brief of December 11, the Cardinals' letter, the Venetian

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Their ambassador, Francesco Diedo, left Rome, declaring that the Republic would have recourse to the devil himself, if a Crusade were proclaimed against it. That was hardly, perhaps, practicable, even at that epoch ; but the Venetians had sent to urge the Turk against Naples, and were busily stirring up the Swiss against the Duchy of Milan.

On January 15, the Duke of Calabria, as Captain-General of the League, entered Ferrara, followed by his army, which included several hundred Turks taken at Otranto—of whom the greater part took the first opportunity of deserting to the Venetians. Gathering from the festivities within the city that Alfonso had arrived, Roberto again advanced in force into the Barco, and challenged him to battle ; but, meeting with no response, retreated to his camp at Pontelagoscuro. Florentine and papal contingents came next, under the command of the Count of Pittigliano and Virginio Orsini. A number of unimportant, but successful actions all along the line raised the spirits of the Ferrarese, and a state ball was given in the Corte Vecchia. In February, the allied princes—Ercole himself, who had now recovered his health, the Duke of Calabria, Lodovico Sforza (acting always in the name of his helpless young nephew, the titular Duke of Milan), Lorenzo de' Medici, the Marchese Federigo Gonzaga (who now first formally joined the League), and Bentivoglio—met in the Diet of Cremona, under the presidency of the Cardinal Gonzaga. “ Upon the preservation of Ferrara,” it was said, “ depends the safety of all Italy.” It was resolved immediately to take the offensive, and to relieve the pressure upon Ferrara by answers, the Pope's rejoinder and the Venetian reply. Cf. *Sex quam elegantissimae epistolae*, printed by William Caxton in 1483 : reproduced in facsimile by James Hyatt, with an introduction and translation by G. Bullen (London, 1892).

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assailing Venice in Lombardy, while a considerable portion of the territories of the Republic should be divided among the allies.

Hardly had the Diet broken up, when Roberto da San Severino attempted to rush Ferrara, on the night between March 10 and 11. With Galeotto della Mirandola and Rodolfo Gonzaga—the one was Ercole's brother-in-law and the other was brother to the Marquis of Mantua, but both were serving the Venetians as condottieri in this campaign¹—he moved from the Po again with all his army and advanced against the city, destroying the Ferrarese outposts, capturing Belfiore, the Angeli and the Certosa, and the outer fortifications of the town itself. But, after several hours' fighting round the ramparts of the Borgo Leone, he was forced to fall back again to Francolino. Together with several pieces of captured artillery, the Venetians carried off the bronze unicorn that Borso had set up in the Certosa, and the statue of Niccolò III from the Angeli.

The whole tide of warfare in Romagna had turned in favour of the League; a successful fight upon the Po, in which a number of small Venetian ships fell into the hands of the Ferrarese, was followed by a severe engagement at Argenta, where the Duke of Calabria defeated the Venetians, who lost—according to Corio's computation—fifteen hundred men in killed and prisoners. But, although the immediate pressure was relieved, the danger still remained, so long as the Venetians lay at Pontelagoscuro. Ercole found the utmost difficulty in extorting from the Powers either the arrears of his stipend as Lieutenant-General of

¹ Costanzo Sforza and Antonio Maria degli Ordelfaffi had likewise gone over to the Venetians.

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the League, or the reinforcements needed for the better defence of Ferrara itself and the security of Stellata, the fortress which was regarded as the key to the situation.

With all the energy of his nature, the Pope urged on the League against the contumacious Republic, pressing the Powers to contribute the men and money they had promised, insisting upon the equipment and maintenance of a powerful fleet to assail the Venetians by sea. "We protest before God and men," he wrote to the King of Naples, "that if anything sinister happen (which may God in His clemency avert!), it will not happen through our fault. All will impute it to thy Majesty."¹ And to the Duke of Milan he represented Ferrara as the bulwark of the rest of Italy, against the insatiable lust of dominion of the Venetians. The position at Pontelagoscuro being too strong to be assailed, the only chance for the salvation of Ferrara is to take the offensive in Lombardy, which he bids the Duke instantly do. Otherwise, should Ferrara fall, the Venetians will certainly turn their victorious arms against Milan. Let him then take the aggressive manfully; all the Powers of Italy will support him, while he, the Pope, will pursue the Venetians, not only with temporal arms, but with censures and interdict.²

This, indeed, was the point to which Buonfrancesco Arlotti, Bishop of Reggio and now Ercole's representative at the Vatican, and the Count Girolamo, who had turned all his old hatred of Ferrara and Naples against the Venetians, were striving to bring the Pope. Sixtus took the decisive step. On May 24, he excommunicated Venice and put the Republic under the interdict, in the most barbarous

¹ Brief of March 17, 1483. *Archivio Vaticano*, xxxix. 15, f. 424.

² Brief of April 21, 1483. *Ibid.*, ff. 511-513.

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formula that the ecclesiastical mind of the epoch could invent or revive. Arlotti and the other ambassadors of the League went to see the bull affixed to the door of San Pietro. On receipt of the news, together with a copy of the document, Ercole sent his ambassador a wild letter of delight and gratitude :—

“It is not possible,” he wrote, “for us to express the joy, gladness and comfort, that we, together with this our most faithful people, take from this singular, immortal and immense benefit and grace, which we are receiving from the Holiness of our Lord through the publication of this bull against the common enemy ; the which benefit is of such sort, nature and greatness, that not only we, all the time of our life, but also our children and those who shall be born from them, shall have to be perpetually most grateful to his Holiness, and shall ever have to remember the most holy and most sacred name of Pope Sixtus the Fourth, and sempiternally to praise, celebrate and sanctify it. And, verily, it seems to us that we cannot sufficiently thank his Holiness, seeing that the benefit is divine and immortal. Still, doing all that is possible, we would have you, with the utmost reverence, submission and humility that you can use, and with those sweetest and most kindly words and gestures that your genius will furnish you with, throw yourself humbly at the feet of the said Holiness, and on our behalf render him the utmost thanks you can, and make him understand that, with our heart, our mind, and with our deeds, we shall strive to thank him ever in such wise that he shall actually feel that we shall not forget what he has done for us ; and so we pray the clemency of Almighty God, that He may lend us grace that we may be able to show to his Holiness our gratitude and servitude and our

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inmost heart. And at the end you will beseech and pray him that, as he does not cease from favouring our affairs with spiritual arms, he will also proceed temporally to our succour and support, even as in both respects he has begun, by sending hither his men-at-arms, and doing all those things that are expedient for our safety ; so that the enemy, seeing that we are aided by his Holiness in every way, may be held back and may know their error ; and that, if they do not correct themselves, as they show that they will not, their unbridled pride and ambition may be tamed.”¹

The strained state of the Duke's mind and the real danger of his situation may excuse this somewhat discreditable epistle. The Pope, now that he had once committed himself, was bent upon doing the thing thoroughly. “Thou canst be assured,” he wrote to Ercole, “that we are bent upon nothing more than upon the conservation of that city of ours, upon which also depends the safety of the rest of Italy.”² He sent corn and other supplies to Ferrara, kept urging on the Powers to move with money and men to Ercole's succour, and dispatched the Bull against the Venetians to all the sovereigns of Europe, bidding them have it published and carried into effect throughout their dominions. “Unless this unbridled lust of conquest be coerced,” he wrote to the Emperor, “we shall have to fear that, even as they occupy our cities of Ravenna and Cervia, Padua, and many other places of diverse princes, so they will reduce Ferrara to their tyrannical sway, and assail the rest of Italy, in order that finally they may presume to get Germany and the other emperies of Christendom into their

¹ *Minute Ducali per Roma a Buonfrancesco Arlotti*, Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio degli Ambasciatori—Roma*.

² Brief of June 8, 1483. *Archivio Vaticano*, xxxix. 15, f. 605.

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power, being especially secure because they preserve an unshaken and inviolable peace with the Turk, the enemy of the Christian name.”¹

But the indomitable Republic mocked at the papal thunders, and appealed to a future Council. At the beginning of the spring, Roberto da San Severino, to whom the Venetians had renewed their former promise of Modena and Reggio, crossed the Adda and carried the war into Milanese territory, under the pretext of restoring the Duchess Bona, and liberating the young Duke from Lodovico. The Duke of Calabria and Lodovico, reinforced by papal troops, invaded the Bergamasco, capturing a number of small places—Roberto not venturing upon a pitched battle, but following them at a distance. In the meanwhile, René of Lorraine had appeared upon the scene, without his Swiss and Provençal soldiery, who had turned back upon hearing of the Pope's change of front, for fear of papal censures, and took over the command of the army of invasion in the Ferrarese territory.² But the troops he brought proved of little use. They scorned the Venetians, fought as often with them as with the enemy, and suffered terribly from the heat. Hearing of the death of Louis XI and the succession of Charles VIII, seeing no prospect of the Neapolitan kingdom, René left the seat of war at the beginning of September, in the hope of securing his claims in Provence and Bar.

Something of the old spirit and valour that he had shown at Sarno and La Mulinella returned to Duke Ercole. In September, hearing that Stellata was assailed by the

¹ Brief of June 15. *Ibid.* ff. 622, 623.

² Sigismondo de' Conti, i. p. 179; Malipiero, *Annali*, p. 279. René arrived in Venice on April 13.

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Venetians and that the little garrison was hard pressed, he sallied out of Ferrara at the head of his men-at-arms and mounted balestrieri, took the enemy in the rear, and drove them headlong in rout. The Venetian standard and a number of prisoners were captured. The danger, however, had grown pressing again. The Pope, declaring that, if Stellata had fallen, it would have been all up with Ferrara itself, was more and more vehement and insistent in his appeals to the Powers of the League, especially Milan and Naples, to provide Ercole with men and money, and in urging the Duke of Savoy and King Ferrante to succour the starving Ferrarese with corn and provisions.¹ He insisted upon the Duke of Calabria leaving Lombardy, and returning in person to the defence of Ferrara. Alfonso complied; but a general attack upon the Venetian position at Pontelagoscuro—to which the Pope had exhorted the generals—failed, much to the grief of his Holiness.²

The war continued, in a half-hearted way and without any important action, alike in Lombardy and the Venetian mainland and in the Ferrarese territory, throughout the spring of 1484, mainly to the disadvantage of the Venetians. Both parties were growing weary of the war, and both had taken the fatal step of appealing to the foreigner. The Pope had written to the King of Hungary, urging him instantly to invade the Venetian territory with a most potent army.³ The Venetians had invited the Duke of Orleans to renew the claims of the Visconti upon Milan, and the Duke of Bourbon in the name of Anjou to assail Naples, while

¹ Various briefs of September 17, November 2, December 2, 1483. *Archivio Vaticano*, xxxix. 16, ff. 21, 68, 84v.

² Briefs of November 15. *Ibid.*, f. 71.

³ Brief of March 10, 1484. *Archivio Vaticano*, xxxix. 17, ff. 49-50.

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they continued to stir up the Turks against the latter kingdom.¹ The great Republic, indeed, was exhausted with its prolonged struggle against the whole of Italy, and was nearly bankrupt. "The arsenal, that in other times has made the world tremble, is emptied; we have famine and pestilence; we shall have to beg for peace and restore all that we have taken. A million and two hundred thousand ducats have been spent, and so many excellent men have perished."²

Through the mediation of the Cardinal of Lisbon, Giorgio Costa, a conference was held in the early summer at Cesena, to arrange terms of peace. But through the bad faith of the Venetians, who were merely seeking to gain time, and the exorbitant demands of Girolamo Riario in the name of the Pope, it proved abortive. And, practically while the conference was sitting, the Venetian fleet, under Jacopo Marcello (who fell in the moment of victory) and Domenico Malipiero, the chronicler, had resumed hostilities, and captured Gallipoli and other places on the Neapolitan coast.

Peace came suddenly from the condottieri in the field. While the war still dragged on in a desultory fashion, relations had grown somewhat strained between Lodovico Sforza and the Duke of Calabria, the former seeing in the prospective marriage of the latter's daughter Isabella to the Duke of Milan an obstacle to his own ambitious designs. He attempted to substitute the Duke of Ferrara for him as commander-in-chief of the army of the League, on the plea that Alfonso, after the capture of Gallipoli, was needed at home for the defence of the

¹ Romanin, iv. p. 415; Piva, ii. p. 48.

² Malipiero, *Annali*, pp. 289, 290.

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Kingdom. The Venetians took advantage of the situation, secretly to offer their support to Lodovico, with a large sum of money to further his plans. At the beginning of July, Trivulzio came disguised into the Venetian camp, and opened negotiations with Roberto da San Severino on Lodovico's behalf.¹ The captains being thus agreed, the potentates could only send their plenipotentiaries to the conference that met at Bagnolo in the Brescian district, where it soon became evident that Lodovico and the Venetians were working together, and that the weaker powers would have to go to the wall.

The Pope stormed against the cessation of hostilities and the conditions proposed. "He uses the most terrible language in the world," wrote Arlotti to Ercole, "and says that he has been deceived and betrayed." Nevertheless if all the allies and the captains of the army were agreed that even a dishonourable peace was to be accepted, he would not take the responsibility of alone resisting it.²

"To-day at sunset," wrote Lodovico Sforza from Bagnolo on August 7, "to the praise and glory of Almighty God, the peace has been concluded and stipulated between the most holy and most serene League and the most illustrious Signoria of Venice, which we hope is to be the establishment and bond of perpetual quiet and rest to the agitations of Italy."³ Venice and Naples were to have back all the places they had lost in the war, as also was Milan; the possessions of the Rossi were ceded to the latter power; Roberto da San Severino was to be Captain-General of the

¹ Cf. Rosmini, *op. cit.*, i. p. 137, ii. p. 126; Malipiero, *Annali*, pp. 295, 296.

² Dispatches of Buonfrancesco Arlotti, July 29 and August 3, 1484. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio degli Ambasciatori—Roma*.

³ Rosmini, *op. cit.*, ii. p. 127.

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new League of all Italy, with a large stipend ; Ercole was forced to surrender to Venice the city of Rovigo with the whole of the Polesine, and to restore all the former privileges of the Venetians in Ferrara, receiving back the rest of the territory that had been lost. In recovering Zaniolo and Comacchio, he was forbidden to have salt-works, or to allow salt to be manufactured in those places.

The Pope lay sick to death, when the news of the conclusion of peace reached Rome. Arlotti had already been instructed by Ercole to implore him to interpose and save him from being betrayed in this fashion. Before going with the other ambassadors of the League to communicate the tidings to the Pope, on the morning of August 12, he called on the Cardinal of San Giorgio at his palace. "The truth is this," said the Cardinal ; "the Holiness of our Lord could not be better disposed than he has been to favour the affairs of your Duke ; but this matter has been taken out of his hands, and others have chosen to do it in their own way, with little consideration for his Holiness and the Count. They can do nothing more now. The Lord Lodovico has willed so, and the most illustrious Lord Duke of Calabria has consented. They are the masters of the field, and we must have patience." And he urged Arlotti not to put pressure upon the Pope, seeing how ill he was, but simply to read the letter that the generals had sent to the ambassadors from the field.

The ambassadors were admitted to the Pope's presence, and the letter read to him. Sixtus suddenly turned to the ambassador of Naples : "Messer Aniello, how is the King pleased with this ?" Taken by surprise, Aniello answered that he hoped his Majesty would do the same as the other allies. The other ambassadors, similarly questioned,

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gave evasive answers ; but Arlotti passionately protested against the way in which the Duke of Ferrara had been abandoned by his allies, and that he had only yielded under compulsion. "We know," said the Pope, "the great prudence of the Majesty of the King, of the Lords of Milan, the Florentines and the Duke of Ferrara, the experience and sagacity of the Dukes of Calabria and Bari, who have brought this about. If all these have made and consented to this peace, judging it to be the better part, we, who have not such great prudence and less experience, are willing to follow them and agree to all they wish, even as we have done during the war. With great expense to ourselves have we carried on that war to save Ferrara, and to please the Majesty of the King and the other allies, and so were we ready to continue. Greatly does it grieve us that the Duke of Ferrara has not more grounds for content and satisfaction ; but since he who has managed this affair thinks that it is necessary so, and that he cannot do otherwise, we, together with that Duke, shall have patience, and shall consider that everything is permitted for the best by our Lord God, from whom cometh all good and nothing evil."¹

But Sixtus could ill dissemble his rage and indignation. When the other ambassadors left the room, Arlotti remained behind, and the Pope bade him comfort Ercole in his name, and remind him that, since Ferrara itself was saved, time would bring new remedies and resources. That same night Sixtus died, denouncing the conditions of the peace with his last breath, declaring that Lodovico Sforza was a traitor.²

¹ In consequence of the great interest and importance of Arlotti's dispatch of August 12, I give the full text in Appendix II., document 14.

² Dispatch of Buonfrancesco Arlotti, August 14, 1484 (Archivio di Modena, *loc. cit.*) ; Sigismondo de' Conti, i. p. 204.

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Mainly through the influence of Giuliano della Rovere, the Cardinal Cybo was elected Pope on August 29, and took the title of Innocent VIII. Ercole bade his envoy, Cristoforo de' Bianchi, remind the new pontiff of the times of Alfonso the Magnanimous, in whose Court they had known each other, and urge him, in the interests of the Papacy, to favour his cause and not to suffer the Venetians to usurp what belonged to the Church by including Castelvoglio, Torre di San Donato, and Polesella, which were in Ferrarese territory proper (according to him, but which the Venetians claimed as a part of the district ceded to them), in the Polesine of Rovigo, "which is of the Empire."¹ But, for the rest, the Duke found himself forced to submit, with the best grace he could.

The Venetians destroyed their fortifications at Pontelagoscuro, and evacuated the Ferrarese district. Ercole could not bear to be present when, on September 8, the disastrous peace was proclaimed at Ferrara, amidst the loud murmurs of the people; he went away on a pilgrimage to the shrine of Loreto. The people openly cursed Lodovico Sforza. When the Duke of Calabria passed through Ferrara a few weeks later, he was looked at askance by the populace, and the Duke refused to meet him, leaving Leonora to do the honours.² Terribly reduced by war and pestilence, Ferrara slowly resumed its normal life. The Studio was reopened in October; the new Venetian Visdomino came in November, ostentatiously welcomed by the Duke and his brothers, but "right badly seen by the people."³

¹ *Istruzione a Cristoforo de' Bianchi*, September 29, 1484. Archivio di Modena, *loc. cit.*

² *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 276. ³ *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 276.

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There were magnificent festivities in Venice at the beginning of February, 1485, to celebrate the peace, with many days' jousts and tournaments, at the instance of Roberto da San Severino. After some hesitation, Ercole accepted the invitation of the Signoria to be present, in sign of amity and complete reconciliation, and was greatly gratified at the cordiality of his reception. On the afternoon of February 3, he arrived by water from Corbola at Chioggia. On the way the Podestà met him, and welcomed him in the name of the Signoria, and when he landed a band of Venetian gentlemen were waiting to escort him to the palace of the town, to assure him of the great expectation that all Venice had of his coming. The next day he went on by sea to Malamocco, where he dined, and was greeted by more Venetian gentlemen from the Signoria. At San Clemente, the Doge and Senators came in the state Bucentaur, with Roberto and Leone da San Severino, to meet and embrace him. Ercole went on board the ducal vessel, and, surrounded by a flotilla of smaller ships, they brought him to his own palace in Venice, "which we have found," he wrote to Leonora, "in every part well prepared, adorned and furnished with abundance of all things meet for our reception and honourable entertainment. Verily, the demonstrations made towards us up to now could not have been greater nor more loving. We have received consolation and comfort therefrom, and we gladly share them with your Ladyship." He spent several days at Venice, using towards the Doge "those most sweet and loving words that were possible to us, to show him our filial observance." Once "we went to Murano, where they make so many kinds of right beautiful vessels of glass." Every day he was with the Doge to watch the jousts, which were of the most

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sumptuous description ; the sons of Roberto da San Severino acquitted themselves with special skill and magnificence, the sons of Giulio Cesare Varano of Camerino taking second place. "Every fresh day have we been more welcomed and caressed by the Serenity of the Prince and by these other gentlemen."¹ Thus did the Duke of Ferrara let himself be paraded in the hard-won triumph of Venice.

¹ *Minute Ducali*, February 3, 4, 6, and 8, 1485, from Ercole to Leonora. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*. Cf. also Malipiero, *Annali*, pp. 296, 297. That some of these magnificent *giostratori* were tilting in borrowed splendours appears from a curious letter from Ercole to Leonora, dated Modena, December 7, 1484 (Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*), in which he declares himself unable to lend Antonio Maria da San Severino "qualche nostra sopravesta lunga da operare ne la giostra."

Chapter VII

IN THE LULL BEFORE THE STORM

THE ten years that follow the peace of Bagnolo are the most splendid in the history of the Courts of the Italian Renaissance, before the terrible wave of ultramontane invasion had swept over the Alps. "It is manifest," writes Guicciardini in the proem to his history, "that, since the Roman Empire, weakened chiefly by reason of the mutation of its ancient customs, began more than a thousand years ago to decline from that greatness to which, with marvellous virtue and fortune, it had ascended, Italy had never felt such great prosperity, nor experienced so desirable a state, as was that in which she reposed in security, the year of Christian Salvation, 1490, and the years which immediately preceded and followed that. Everywhere she was restored to perfect peace and tranquillity; ¹ the most mountainous and most barren places were cultivated, no less than the plains and more fertile regions; she was subjected to no other rule save that of her own sons. Not only was she most abundant in inhabitants and in wealth, but shone with the utmost lustre by the magnificence of many princes, by the splendour of many most noble and most beauteous cities, by the majesty of religion of which she was the seat; she

¹ Guicciardini here forgets the perpetual wars between Pope Innocent VIII and King Ferrante of Naples.

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flourished with men most skilful in the administration of public affairs, with intellects right noble in all the sciences and in every famous and useful art; nor was she deprived (according to the usage of that age) of military glory. Wondrously adorned with so many gifts, deservedly did she win a name and glorious fame among all the nations.”¹

The hero of this splendid epoch must be sought in Florence, in the person of Lorenzo de’ Medici, whose ever-increasing influence and assiduous watchfulness, lest any accident should disturb the harmony, kept the balance of power in Italy; while the villain, even then plotting his own rise upon the ruin of the rest, is no less certainly Lodovico Sforza, “Il Moro,” titular Duke of Bari still, but preparing by all means to supplant his unfortunate nephew, Gian Galeazzo, upon the Milanese throne.

The Duke of Ferrara had resolved on no more war, chance what might, and the rest of his reign was a prolonged effort to keep neutral and preserve the peace of his duchy. Traveling, building, hunting and splendid display, were ostensibly the main interests and external occupations of his life. A special charm was given to Ferrarese society by the peculiar liberty allowed to women, not only to married ladies, but even to young girls, to an extent quite unknown in other cities of Italy.² Under the care and guidance of their mother, that noble and most admirable lady, the Duchess Leonora, the two daughters of Ercole, Isabella and Beatrice, were growing up together with their half-sister Lucrezia to be the mirrors of Renaissance womanhood, surrounded by poets, musicians and scholars, sharing in all the gorgeous

¹ *Storia d’Italia*, i. 1.

² Cf. Lodovico Ariosto, *La Scolastica*, Act ii. sc. 4, where the old Ferrarese Bonifazio defends the reputation of his countrywomen against the Veronese student, Claudio.

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life of the epoch, drinking in what was best in its spirit, absolutely untainted by its darker side—its cruelty and lust, its loosening of all ties and obligations, human and divine,—which, though held in check in Ferrara by the personal influence of the Duke and Duchess, was manifest enough there as elsewhere.¹ Hardly in the least exaggerated is the enthusiastic praise of the women of the House of Este, which Ariosto puts upon the lips of “the courteous enchantress” in satisfaction of Bradamante’s desire to hear of the *belle e virtuose donne* to come from her race :—

Da te uscir veggio le pudiche donne,
Madri d’Imperatori e di gran Regi,
Reparatrici e solide colonne
Di case illustri e di domini egregi ;
Che men degne non son ne le lor gonne,
Ch’in arme i cavallier, di sommi pregi,
Di pietà, di gran cor, di gran prudenza,
Di somma e incomparabil continenza.²

The frequent absences of the Duke from his capital, and the taxes imposed to gratify his lavish spectacular and decorative tastes, aroused much discontent at times. “He just takes,” says a contemporary manuscript,³ “all the pleasures that he likes, and fills up his time with astrology and necromancy, giving very small audience to his people.”

¹ Mrs. Ady finely remarks : “If in Isabella we have the supreme representative of Renaissance culture in its highest and most intellectual phase, Beatrice is the type of that new-found joy in life, that intoxicating rapture in the actual sense of existence, that was the heritage of her generation.” (*Beatrice d’Este*, preface, p. vi.)

² *Orlando Furioso*, xiii. 57. “From thee I see issue the pure ladies, mothers of emperors and of great kings, that shall restore and sustain illustrious Houses and noble dominions. Not less worthy are they in their women’s weeds than the knights in arms ; of highest worth, pitiful and great of heart, right prudent, supreme and incomparable in virtue.”

³ Frizzi, iv. p. 147.

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Murders and robberies with violence, even sacking of shops, took place in broad daylight.¹ The offices of State were openly sold to fill the ducal treasury, and the purchasers got back their outlay by extortion and oppression. Away from Ferrara, as at Massa Fiscaglia in 1488 and at Argenta in 1489, the people rose and took vengeance summarily upon their Podestà, and, in a subsequent chapter, we shall see an even more notable act of popular justice in Ferrara itself.

Duke Ercole had a perfect passion for the drama. Under his auspices Ferrara was now to witness what was little less than the restoration, the new birth of the theatre of the ancients, naturally followed a little later by the modern Italian comedy of the Renaissance. With the year 1486 begins the great series of dramatic representations in Ferrara, which marks an epoch in the history of the Italian stage. Nearly fifteen years before at Mantua—recent researches have shown that it was precisely in that fateful July of 1471, when Duke Borso lay on his death-bed at Ferrara, and his nephew Niccolò had fled from Ercole to seek aid from the Gonzaga and Sforza—the *Festa* or *Favola d'Orfeo* of young Angelo Poliziano had been recited under the auspices of the Marchese Lodovico and the Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga, as a part of the festivities that welcomed the Duke and Duchess of Milan.² This, however, as Del Lungo and D'Ancona have pointed out, does not represent the beginning of the Italian secular drama ;

¹ Writing under 1478, Caleffini says : " In this time Ferrara was a den of thieves, and there were many murderers ; every day people were killed, wounded or robbed, and never was any robber or murderer found." In 1480, it was found necessary to issue a proclamation abrogating the right of the churches to give sanctuary to criminals. *Croniche del Duca Ercole*, ff. 33, 35v.

² I. Del Lungo, *Florentia*, pp. 284 *et seq.*

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in spite of its mythological theme, Poliziano's *Orfeo* still retains the characteristics of the *sacra rappresentazione*; but it clearly implies "the application of the forms of the popular and religious mystery to a classical and profane subject, and, corresponding to this, the rising of an Italian theatre no longer in the squares or in a church, but in a Court."¹ For some time this stood alone, until Isabella d' Este brought the Ferrarese influence to the city of the Gonzaga; and we must look to Ferrara and the year 1486 for the real beginning of the Italian drama. "Ercole I," writes D'Ancona, "without entirely abandoning or despising the religious form, favoured and aided with his example and with his encouragement the instauration of the secular theatre, of classical character in its art and of courtly magnificence in its mounting."²

On January 25, 1486, the stage was set up in the cortile of the ducal palace opposite the chapel, and the series began with the *Menaechmi* of Plautus. The Marquis of Mantua had come the day before to be present, and some thousands of spectators witnessed the performance in silence, bursting out into clamorous and enthusiastic applause at the end. The scenery and the realism of a boat with sails and oars and ten persons on board, which moved across the stage, roused general admiration, and the cost is said to have amounted to more than a thousand ducats.³ Next year, 1487, on January 21, to honour the marriage of his favourite Giulio Tassoni with Ippolita de' Contrari, the Duke had an original Italian play produced—the *Favola di Cefalo*, by that most

¹ Del Lungo, *op. cit.*, p. 320; A. D'Ancona, *Origini del Teatro Italiano*, ii. pp. 349, 350.

² *Op. cit.*, ii. p. 352.

³ *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 278; Zambotto, f. 173.

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perfect knight of Italian court chivalry, Niccolò da Correggio. Though not devoid of merit, the play may be described as an imitation of Poliziano's *Orfeo*, with hardly a trace of its lyrical beauty and more obviously influenced by classical models. It was on this same occasion that the Duke gave the bridegroom the magnificent new palace that he had built near San Francesco, now called the Palazzo Pareschi, and granted him the right to bear the arms of Este.

In this same month of January, 1487, the marriage was celebrated of Annibale Bentivoglio with Ercole's bastard daughter, Lucrezia. Annibale had visited Ferrara two years before, and Ercole, writing to Giovanni Bentivoglio, had expressed the great pleasure that he had derived from the visit, and assured him that the young man had won the hearts of all the Court. He painted in glowing terms the mutual affection of the two, "being both beautiful and in their first love," and suggested that the marriage had better be hurried on. Bentivoglio, however, raised some objection, and the matter had been in consequence deferred until this year.¹ To do honour to the occasion, on January 25, the *Amphitruo* of Plautus was given, with musical interludes; there was a Paradise or Olympus constructed with lamps for stars and little children dressed as planets, "that was a wondrous thing to see"; but the performance "was not finished, because there came a great rain, which fell upon the spectators, although the cortile was almost all covered over with canvas." The entertainment was repeated on February 3, for the pleasure of the Marquis of Mantua, with-

¹ Letters of Ercole to Giovanni II. Bentivoglio, January 8 and 14, 1485. (Dallari, pp. 108, 109). Lucrezia's dowry from her father amounted to 10,000 ducats, to which Giovanni Bentivoglio added 2,000 more (*ibid.*, p. 114, note).

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out whose genial and sportive presence no festa in Ferrara seemed complete ; this time they played the whole thing through, with a pageant of the Labours of Hercules at the end.¹

In the years that followed, Boiardo produced his *Timone*, a dramatization of a dialogue of Lucian, and Tebaldeo, whom we shall meet again, recast the *Orfeo* of Poliziano into the form of a regular tragedy. Gradually almost all the comedies of Plautus and Terence were brought upon the boards of the ducal theatre—occasionally in the original, but more usually translated or imitated—Ercole being exceedingly particular about the fidelity and accuracy of the versions provided for him. And these performances—which were held sometimes in the cortile, sometimes in the Sala Grande of the palace—were not confined to the Court. As far as space admitted, the people were allowed to assist as spectators ; and in the first printed edition of the *Cefalo* it is distinctly stated that the fable was “composed by the Lord Niccolò da Correggio for the most illustrious Duke Ercole, and by him represented to his most prosperous people of Ferrara.” This was especially the case when the representation was held in the cortile ; according to Zambotto, as many as ten thousand persons witnessed the performance of the *Menaechmi*, which may be said to have inaugurated the whole.

A curious episode of the year 1487 may be mentioned. Ercole had vowed a pilgrimage to St. James of Compostela, and set out in March with a splendid company. At Milan, where he stopped for Holy Week, a message reached him from the Pope bidding him, under pain of excommunication, go no further, and commuting the matter of the vow to

¹ Zambotto, ff. 181v.—182v.

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a visit to Rome. It seems that Innocent scented some political intrigue under this religious seeming. "Duke Ercole took it very ill," writes the Ferrarese Diarist, "but he had to obey and to go to Rome."¹ He reached the Eternal City on May 22, and had a ceremonious reception, representatives of the Pope meeting him at intervals on the way. Half a mile before reaching the Ponte Milvio, the Senator and Conservatori greeted him; between the bridge and the gate, the households of the Cardinals and the ambassadors of the Italian sovereigns, and, a little nearer, the household of the Pope with twenty-four prelates and other dignitaries, welcomed him. The Cardinal Lorenzo Cybo and the Cardinal Ascanio Sforza awaited him, and brought him to the palace into the presence of Innocent, preceded by the ambassadors. The Pontiff received him with all the Cardinals sitting round, as is done in the Consistory, and made him sit among them under the last Cardinal Deacon, after which Cybo and Sforza brought him to his apartments.² On the last day of May, Ascanio Sforza gave a great hunt in the Duke's honour, six miles out of Rome, which "was a worthy and honourable thing, alike because of the equipment, which was right splendid and magnificent, and because of the banquet, which was as sumptuous and ample as could be described."³ Ercole left Rome on June 5, and stayed some days at Urbino and Forlì on his way home. While at the latter town, he

¹ *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 279.

² These details of Ercole's reception are from a MS. now in the Vatican Library, *Cod. Barberini*, lvii. 44 (ff. 69v, 70).

³ Thus Ercole to his wife, June 3, 1487. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*. The Notaio di Nantiporto says: "They took only one stag; the hunt was badly arranged; but right well arranged was the banquet at San Giovanni della Magliana." *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, iii. 2, col. 1105.)

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heard that Ippolito had started for Hungary, to take up his Archbishopric of Esztergom (the young prelate was not nine years old), and sent him his paternal blessing through Leonora. Count Girolamo was away at Imola, sick apparently with a diplomatic illness ; but he very courteously received Alberto della Sala, whom Ercole had sent to thank him for his reception at Forlì.¹

The next year, 1488, was one of blood and tumult for Ercole's neighbours, the tyrants of Romagna. Count Girolamo Riario was butchered in Forlì on April 14, and his corpse dragged through the streets by the populace ; but prompt aid from Milan and Bologna placed the city again at the mercy of the Count's heroic widow, Caterina Sforza. On the last day of May at Faenza, Francesca, Giovanni Bentivoglio's daughter,—moved thereunto, says Machiavelli, " either by jealousy or by having been badly treated by her husband, or by her own evil nature,"—murdered her husband, Galeotto Manfredi, in their own bed-chamber. According to Machiavelli, Bentivoglio was privy to the design, in the hopes of becoming lord of Faenza. With a condottiere of the Duke of Milan and a strong force of armed men, he advanced upon Faenza and occupied it ; but the men of the Val di Lamone poured into the city, shouting for young Astorre (the murdered man's son) and for the Florentines, killed the Milanese condottiere, took Bentivoglio prisoner, and handed him over, together with the place, to Antonio Boscoli, the commissary of Florence.

Informed of what had happened, the Duke of Ferrara wrote at once to Ginevra Sforza (Bentivoglio's wife) and to Annibale, offering his services on behalf of their husband and

¹ Letters of June 20 and 22, 1487, from Ercole to Leonora. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*.

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father. Lorenzo de' Medici and the Florentines, before releasing him, required from the Duke of Milan a promise that he would interfere no more with the city and people of Faenza; and Ercole, who was insistent on Bentivoglio's behalf, alike with Lodovico Sforza and Lorenzo de' Medici, dissuaded Ginevra and Annibale from their professed intention of declaring war against Florence, if he were not instantly set free. By the end of June, Bentivoglio was back in Bologna, and took his revenge by persuading Il Moro to give an annual provision of 300 ducats to Ottaviano Manfredi, a rival claimant to Astorre's signory, who stayed under Ercole's protection at Ferrara to serve in case of need as a threat against Lorenzo and the Florentines, who by the protection of Faenza had enormously increased their influence in eastern Italy.¹

In November, a conspiracy of the Malvezzi and Bargellini and others at Bologna, to murder Bentivoglio with all his family in their palace at a banquet and overturn the State, was discovered on the very day upon which it was to have taken effect. On December 10, Lucrezia wrote to her step-mother, the Duchess Leonora: "Now, thanks be to God, I find myself in good favour with these my magnificent parents-in-law, and they treat me very affectionately, with demonstrations of love better than in the past; on my side I shall strive my best that these things shall last. I shall write nothing else to your Excellence, save that we have all had a great fright, and especially myself, who was never too courageous. I still cannot free me from it, for, at every

¹ See various letters interchanged between Ercole, Ginevra and Annibale, and Giovanni Bentivoglio, during June and July, 1488. Dallari, pp. 121-123. Both the Bentivoglio, father and son, were in the pay of the Duke of Milan, and Ercole had frequently, in these years, to use his influence to get their stipends regularly given to them.

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little noise I hear, it seems to me that those are at hand who come to do some harm.”¹

The splendid marriages of the Duke's three eldest legitimate children lit up the years 1490 and 1491. As early as 1477, as we have seen, Alfonso d' Este, the “hereditary prince” of Ferrara, had been betrothed to the sister of Gian Galeazzo, Anna Sforza, then a child a little older than her prospective bridegroom. In 1480 Lodovico Sforza, then twenty-nine, had demanded the hand of Isabella; but, as she was already engaged to the son of the Marchese Federigo Gonzaga, Ercole offered Lodovico the hand of his second little girl, Beatrice, instead—which Il Moro promptly accepted.² The time had now come for these alliances to be carried into effect. In February, 1490, Isabella was taken in state to Mantua to be married to Gian Francesco Gonzaga, who had succeeded to his father as Marquis in 1484. At the end of the following December, in a winter of unusual severity, Beatrice with her mother, escorted by Galeazzo Visconti, a favourite courtier of the Duke of Bari, her brother Alfonso (who was to fetch back his own bride to Ferrara) and her uncle Sigismondo, joined on the way by Isabella, went to Pavia, where they were met by Lodovico Sforza, and the marriage was celebrated in the ducal chapel on January 17, 1491.³ A most magnificent reception at

¹ Dallari, p. 126.

² See letter from Duke Ercole to the Marquis of Mantua, in Luzio and Renier, *Delle Relazioni di Isabella d' Este Gonzaga con Lodovico e Beatrice Sforza*, p. 77; cf. Dallari, pp. 39, 40.

³ A full and picturesque account is given by Mrs. Ady, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-66. Leonora was a little nervous, because on the first night “that result had not followed which we naturally desired,” as Ercole put it—this being a point of great importance as non-summation of marriage in those days was a frequent pretext for a political divorce later. Ercole, however, assured her that all would

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Milan followed, where a long series of splendid balls, with pageants and spectacles directed by no less a personage than Leonardo da Vinci himself, welcomed the young Ferrarese princess. Ercole was especially delighted to hear from his wife that Lodovico talked to her with great familiarity and affection, without using any reserve. "And when your Ladyship returns here," he writes, "we shall be glad for you to tell us by word of mouth exactly what he said, as you say that you will do."¹

Reading between the lines of another letter from Ercole to Leonora, we gather that—not unnaturally—the daughter of King Ferrante had not been prepossessed in favour of the Duke of Bari before this visit, and that her husband was disposed to exult over her, in the testimony that she was being forced to bear to her new son-in-law's merits. Ercole has learned from her letter, he says, how Lodovico is heaping all imaginable demonstrations of affection upon her and the rest of the party, and how his Excellence, in public and in private, alike in the presence of the Venetian orator and in that of the Marquis of Mantua, has shown the cordial love he bears to him and her, and that he desires everything that is to Ercole's honour, reputation and advantage. "We have received such singular content, joy and pleasure from these things, that it is impossible for us completely to express it; for we see that the most illustrious Lord, Messer Lodovico, gives every day further proofs of the cordial love that

be well; Lodovico had refrained "because of the girl's inexperience and timidity, and the true love that he bears her, and because of the great desire his Excellence has had not to displease her"; he is no doubt waiting for *uno bon die a quel acto*, i.e. a day considered favourable by the astrologers. (Letter of January 21, 1491. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*.)

¹ Letter of January 20, 1491. Archivio di Modena, *loc. cit.*

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his Excellence bears us, and of his excellent will and disposition towards us. For this your Ladyship has to thank him, in your name and in ours, with all your power, and to make him understand that we shall always be grateful to him for so many honourable demonstrations. And right well does it please us that your Ladyship should have learned to know by true experience what we have always told you concerning the prudence and wisdom of the said Lord, his goodness, and the love that his Excellence bears us, and what we have always believed and firmly expected from him ; for you will have seen and found it to be even more than we told you. And if you went over there with this good opinion, you will now return all the better edified, having seen, as you have, the excellent proofs of which you write to us, and you will think that we had formed a good and true opinion.”¹

But even then a slight cloud appeared on the horizon. At her very entry into the city, Beatrice resented having to yield precedence to her cousin, Isabella d' Aragona Sforza, the rightful Duchess of Milan, and thus began the bitter rivalry between these girls—which, it can hardly be doubted, was one of the factors in the mingled mass of motives that urged Lodovico on in his fatal course. For some while, however, all external manifestations of amity were kept up between the two Duchesses, and when once Lodovico had been induced to break off his liaison with his beloved mistress, Cecilia Gallerani, Beatrice's marriage was in most respects a happy one.² Dancing and riding, hawking and

¹ Letter from Ercole at Ferrara to Leonora at Milan, January 29, 1491. Archivio di Modena, *loc. cit.*

² For all these transactions, see Mrs. Ady, *op. cit.*, chapter viii. I can hardly follow her, however, in rejecting the story of the animosity between the two duchesses ; cf. Luzio and Renier, *op. cit.*,

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hunting, filled up her time, quaintly mingled with practical joking and horse-play of a very primitive description. "The two duchesses," wrote Jacopo Trotti to Ercole on April 28, "have been having a sparring-match, and the Duke of Bari's wife has knocked down her of Milan."¹ It is impossible not to suspect a double meaning in the Ferrarese diplomatist's report. Well had it been for Milan and the House of Sforza, if Beatrice had been content with thus knocking down her Neapolitan cousin only in sport!

Anna and Alfonso had been privately married in Milan on January 23, and at the same time the marriage had been arranged between the younger Ercole d' Este, the son of the Duke's brother Sigismondo, and Angela Sforza, one of the nieces of Gian Galeazzo. There had been some haggling—unseemly to our modern notions, but taken as a matter of course according to the feeling and fashion of that age—about Anna's jewels and Angela's dowry. Duke Ercole professed himself completely satisfied with his wife's diplomacy in these delicate matters, especially as the other side was equally pleased; right glad was he, too, to hear that Leonora had taken a liking to her new daughter-in-law. "The more the most illustrious Madonna Anna satisfies your Ladyship," he writes, "and the better she gets on with

p. 87. The flattering utterances of a mere Court poet like Bellincioni cannot, surely, outweigh the testimony of Bernardino Corio (iii. pp. 430, 458), and of the Ferrarese ambassador in Milan, not to speak of the bitter reference to Beatrice in Isabella's own appeal, a little later, to her father. On May 21, 1492, Jacopo Trotti wrote from Milan to Duke Ercole: "This Duchess of Milan keeps rabid and desperate with the envy that she feels more than ever towards our Duchess of Bari." (Quoted by Balan, v. p. 328, note 6).

¹ Mrs. Ady, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

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you, so much the more shall we be consoled and with greater contentment.”¹

At the beginning of February Isabella d' Este accompanied Alfonso and Anna, with the Duchess, to Ferrara for the full solemnity. Escorted by two hundred knights of Milan, led by Ermes Sforza and the Count of Caiazzo, Francesco da San Severino, the bridal train came along the Po in a gaily decorated bucentaur to the Ferrarese landing-place, and passed the night in the convent of San Giorgio, Leonora and Isabella going on to the Castello. Next morning, February 12, Isabella came to fetch the bride, and the whole party entered Ferrara on horseback over the Ponte di San Giorgio and rode through the streets, greeted by pageantry in front of the Tassoni Palace, at the Schifanoia, outside San Francesco and in the chief piazza. Under a canopy of white damask, Alfonso and Anna went together up the steps of the Corte Vecchia, where Leonora was waiting in state to receive them. There was a dance in the evening, followed by the performance of the *Amphitruo* again; on the next day, after the nuptial benediction, there was another festa in the Sala Grande of the palace, when the Duke gave them the *Menaechmi*; and at nightfall the *sposi* were brought by the covered way that connected it with the Corte Vecchia to the Castello, and there put to bed with the curious ceremonies and practical joking which the taste of the age approved.

¹ Letter from Ercole at Ferrara to Leonora at Pavia, February 1, 1491. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*. In the same letter occurs a curious piece of etiquette: "As to the desire of the most illustrious Lord Lodovico, that his consort should be written to as *Illustrissima*, we say that it seems to us quite proper that, if *Illustrissimo* be written to the husband, *Illustrissima* should be written to the wife; and we had foreseen this, because, in the letter that we wrote to the said Madama Duchessa di Bari, we wrote *Illustrissima*, as your Ladyship will have seen."

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The Marquis of Mantua especially distinguished himself by his facetiousness on this occasion. Anna took it very quietly but Alfonso gave them back as good as he got.¹

Isabella sent such a glowing account of their brother's wedding to Beatrice, that the Duchess of Bari wrote back that she really seemed herself to be present at it. "I am quite certain," she said, "that those parades and triumphs have been done with that mastery and gallant show that your Excellence writes me; for, since they were thought out and arranged by the most illustrious Lord our Father, there is no doubt that the whole will have been carried out with the greatest wisdom and perfection, such being the custom of his Excellence."²

Alfonso's secretary wrote of Anna in after years: "She was most beautiful and most gracious; and little else can be written about her, because she lived but a short while."³ She was quiet and devout in disposition, and won her father-in-law's heart at once. Otherwise, she remains little more than a sweet and gracious shadow.

The year 1492 opened under what seemed most favourable auspices for the maintenance of the peace of Italy. In January, the long conflict between the Church and Naples was brought to an end by a treaty, practically an alliance between the Pope and the King. But the death of that merchant arbiter of the destinies of the peninsula, Lorenzo de' Medici, on April 8, changed the aspect of affairs.

¹ See extract from the letter from Ermes Sforza and the Count of Caiazzo to the Duke of Milan, in Luzio and Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 96. For another instance, with a serious ending, of the taste of the age in these nuptial japeries, see Giraldis, *Ecatommiti*, i. 10.

² Letter of February 23, 1491. Luzio and Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

³ Bonaventura Pistofilo, *Vita di Alfonso I d' Este*, p. 492.

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In the latter part of April, Ercole was in Rome, purely for his devotion and to visit the holy places, as he protested. There had been some talk of his going on to Naples; but the Pope objected on the grounds that, especially after the recent conclusion of the treaty, such a journey would wear a political aspect. The King, therefore, sent an ambassador to the Duke, to express his regret that he was unable to invite him to visit him. "We have accepted the excuse of his Majesty," writes Ercole to Leonora, "since it is caused by the above considerations; we think that it is well to guard ourselves from putting jealous ideas into the heads of others, and especially since we have neighbours of the kind that we have."¹

On the evening of July 25, Pope Innocent VIII died; and on August 11, the infamous Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia was elected to the papacy, and took the title of Alexander VI. "With simony and a thousand rascalities and shamefulness," said the Venetian orator in Milan to Jacopo Trotti, Ercole's representative, "the Pontificate has been sold, which is an ignominious and detestable thing."² And his Magnificence merely voiced the common conscience of Christendom. But Manfredo Manfredi, the Ferrarese ambassador in Florence, knowing the religious susceptibilities of the Duchess Leonora, wrote to her that, in spite of the things that had been done, Alexander's elevation was to be held the work of the Holy Spirit, and that men said that he would prove a glorious Pontiff.³ There was wild exultation at the

¹ Letter of April 21, 1492. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*.

² Dispatch of Jacopo Trotti to Ercole, August 28, 1492. Pastor, iii. document 14.

³ Letters of August 11 (?) and 17. Cappelli, *Fra Girolamo Savonarola*, pp. 322, 323.

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Milanese Court, where the whole election was ascribed to the machinations of the Cardinal Ascanio Sforza. A few days after the news of the election had spread through Italy, Isabella d' Este went to Milan by way of Cremona and Pavia, and, from Pavia and again from the capital, she wrote to tell her husband of the universal delight. On August 19, she dined with Lodovico and Beatrice, and after dinner, in the presence of the Duke and Duchess of Milan (who appear already to have been regarded as almost negligible quantities in their own duchy, Lodovico showed a letter from the Milanese ambassador in Rome (who had, of course, written to him and not to his nominal sovereign), which he proceeded to read aloud. In this dispatch the Pope was represented as telling the ambassador that he confessed that he had been made Pope by Ascanio, "miraculously and contrary to the opinion of all the world," and that he intended to be the most grateful Pope that there ever was—with much more of the same tenor. Then Lodovico produced what purported to be a letter written in the Pope's own hand to Ascanio, in a similar tone, and declared that his Holiness had told the ambassador that, knowing the importance of his (Lodovico's) position and his prudence, he meant to rule in accordance with his views in such wise that he would practically be seated on the papal throne! Whether the luckless young Duke of Milan had enough sense to realize that this triumph of his uncle was his own ruin, we cannot say; but Isabella d' Este assured them all that she and her husband were greatly delighted, because of the affinity that they had with the Lord Lodovico.¹

In November, Alfonso d' Este went with "a most beau-

¹ Letter of August 19 from Isabella to the Marquis of Mantua. Luzio and Renier, *op. cit.*, pp. 351-352.

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teous company ” to congratulate the Pope on his elevation, and to commend his father’s States to his protection. Alexander received him with the utmost cordiality, and heaped honours upon him. In Alfonso’s train was the new Court painter of Ferrara, Ercole de’ Roberti, with a commission from the Duchess to see certain things (sculptures and pictures, presumably), and report on them to her.¹ Alfonso was back in Ferrara by December 18; and on January 3, 1493, the Duke wrote a somewhat fulsome letter to the Pope, thanking him for his “singular benignity, liberality, grace, humanity and ineffable charity.”²

While in Rome, Don Alfonso had probably seen in the palace of S.Maria in Portico a young girl whose name was destined in after years to be linked—somewhat ambiguously—with his own: Madonna Lucrezia Borgia. We are fortunately not here concerned with the family affairs of the House of Borgia, save in so far as they touch those of the princes of the House of Este. Suffice it to say that, when her father was elected Pope, Lucrezia was between twelve and thirteen years old, four years younger than her formidable brother Cesare.³ Her mother, the Roman Vannozza Catanei, had taken as second husband a Mantuan humanist, Carlo Canale, in 1486. The Pope had placed his daughter—whom he loved, as the Ferrarese ambassador in Rome, Gian Andrea Boccaccio, Bishop of Modena, wrote to Ercole, *in superlativo grado*—under the charge of his kinswoman, Adriana dei Mila, the widow of Lodovico Orsini. In the same palace, likewise under the protecting wing of this

¹ Venturi, *L'Arte Ferrarese nel periodo di Ercole I*, ii. p. 415.

² Gregorovius, *Lucrezia Borgia*, document 8.

³ According to the documents found by Gregorovius, Lucrezia was born on April 18,^y 1480, and Cesare in 1476.

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serviceable lady, lived a girl some four or five years older than Lucrezia, whose magnificent head of hair excited universal admiration in the Eternal City; this was Donna Giulia Farnese, ostensibly the young wife of Adriana's son Ursino, in reality the mistress of the Sovereign Pontiff himself. When a mere Cardinal, Alexander had been contented with a Spanish noble for his daughter, and had found her a prospective husband in the young Count of Aversa, Don Gasparo da Procida. But now a great Italian alliance seemed desirable. Don Gasparo came to Rome after the Pope's accession to claim his bride, only to find another competitor in the field, in the person of Giovanni, Count of Cottignola and tyrant of Pesaro, an illegitimate son of Costanzo Sforza. The Magnifico Giovanni had previously been married to Maddalena Gonzaga, sister to the Marchese Gian Francesco, who had died in childbirth. In the following June, 1493, the marriage between Giovanni Sforza and Lucrezia Borgia was formally celebrated in Rome, and the Holy Father was much delighted with the present of richly-worked plate that Ercole sent on this occasion.¹

Even before the death of Innocent VIII, Lodovico Sforza had been in treaty with the French. Beatrice, intensely ambitious for his sake and her own, was urging him to make himself Duke of Milan in very deed, and he anticipated dire opposition from Naples. In January, 1492, he had been holding long and secret conferences with the French ambassadors, had shown great jubilation at the result, and professed a desire to speak in secret with Ercole. The concert of the Italian Powers was clearly breaking up; in May, Jacopo

¹ It was then that Boccaccio, writing to Ercole, used the oft-repeated phrase concerning Giulia Farnese: *Madonna Julia de Farnese, de qua est tantus sermo*. Gregorovius, document 10.

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Trotti, watching the game at Milan, informed Ercole that it would take little to bring about a direct rupture between Milan and Naples.¹ Under pretext of a vow, Ercole went to Milan in July, and had a long interview with Lodovico, whose ambassador in France, Carlo di Belgiojoso, was manifestly doing all in his power to bring about a French invasion of Italy—on the grounds, it will be remembered, of reviving the old claims of the House of Anjou upon the Kingdom of Naples.

The supposed slight inflicted upon Lodovico by Naples and Florence at the coronation of Pope Alexander, when King Ferrante, at the instigation of Piero de' Medici, negatived the former's proposal that one ambassador should speak for all the allied Italian Powers, did little more than increase his desire for the coming of the invader. Already, in September, he had openly told Trotti to inform Ercole that the French King had decided upon the conquest of Naples, "as a thing belonging and pertaining to his Majesty."² A month later, Lodovico accused the Duchess Isabella of Milan of attempting to administer a mysterious white powder to Galeazzo da San Severino and a certain Rozzone, a favourite of the Duke her husband, with the intention of diverting the Duke's affections from the latter, but which in reality was a deadly poison. Her supposed agents were imprisoned and put to the question. The Neapolitan ambassador implored Lodovico to hush the matter up, but the latter sent copies of the process to be read to the royal family of Naples and to the Pope. The old King was furious, declared that the whole process was a mere plot on

¹ Cf. Trotti's dispatches during January, February and May, 1492, cited by Balan, v. pp. 377, 378.

² Cf. Balan, v. p. 378, note 6.

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the part of Lodovico to ruin his grandchild, and ordered his second son, the Prince Federigo of Altamura, who was then in Rome attempting to sow discord between the Pope and Milan, to seek an audience of the Sovereign Pontiff, and lay the whole blame upon the Duke of Bari, as he deserved.¹

In January, 1493, Leonora went to Milan, to assist at the birth of Beatrice's first child, who was born on the 25th; named first Ercole, he is better known in history as Massimiliano Sforza. For days all the bells of Milan rang, prisoners were released, and the whole Lombard capital was gay with pageants and processions. And at Ferrara the rejoicings were scarcely less at the reception of the good tidings. Ercole wrote enthusiastically to his wife, declaring that he rejoiced at Lodovico's good fortune no less than if it had been his own. "All to-day, in token of gladness, we have had cannons fired and bells rung through all the city, with all the other demonstrations and signs of joy that befit such festive occasions, and we have ordained that to-morrow, to praise God, there be made a goodly and most solemn procession, and we shall also have a solemn Mass sung for the same intention."²

The birth of this little prince precipitated the catastrophe. Although the statement, sometimes repeated, that Gian Galeazzo and his wife were barely allowed the necessities of life is absolutely contradicted by the accounts still preserved of their expenses in the Archives of Milan, it is evident that Lodovico had already usurped the State

¹ Letter from the King to the Prince of Altamura, December 26, 1492. Trinchera, *Codice Aragonese*, ii. 1, p. 229. Cf. also the extracts from Trotti's dispatches, in Balan, v. p. 378.

² Letters of January 26, 1493. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*.

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in everything, save the title of Duke ; all the fortresses of the duchy were in his hands, and the administration was absolutely his. Exasperated at the sight and sound of these rejoicings, which were far in excess of those that had welcomed the birth of her own son Francesco a few years before, Isabella wrote that piteous and passionate appeal to her father, the Duke of Calabria, which may still be read in the pages of Corio, urging him by his paternal piety, by his love for her, by her just tears, by the magnanimity of a king, to deliver his son-in-law and daughter from this shameful servitude and restore to them their rightful dominion.¹ Alfonso of Calabria lent a ready ear to his daughter's appeal and urged his father, King Ferrante, to maintain the cause of his grandchildren with arms. The rupture between the two States seemed imminent. But appearances of amity were still kept up. The King protested again and again that the Duke of Bari had no reason for suspecting his dispositions and intentions towards him, that he was absolutely contented that he should keep his position in the government of the duchy, and that he himself was disposed to do everything possible to preserve and augment his authority.²

But, in truth, the desires of Lodovico went far beyond the throne of Milan—concerning the investiture of which he was soon to open negotiations with Maximilian, King of the Romans. He was dreaming of the acquisition for himself of the crown of a north Italian kingdom. In the April of this year, 1493, mainly through the diplomacy of

¹ *Storia di Milano*, iii. pp. 458, 459. Is it, perhaps, possible that the letter is the rhetorical exercise of some humanist ?

² Letter to Antonio da Gennaro, royal ambassador in Milan, of February 17, 1493. Trinchera, ii. 1, p. 288.

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the Cardinal Ascanio, a new League was concluded between the Pope, the Republic of Venice and the Duke of Milan, ostensibly to protect the States of the Church from Florence and Naples—Il Moro still professing to act in the name of his unfortunate nephew.

Ercole was probably much perplexed and divided in his mind. His ambassador at Rome, the Bishop Boccaccio, and his ambassador at Milan, Jacopo Trotti, both disliked this League. In January, the former had written to warn him that the Pope was not to be trusted, but would always side with the victor, and that the Duke of Bari must needs walk very warily and use much circumspection. Trotti, likewise, thought the situation full of danger.¹ Leonora watched with anxious dread the tempest about to burst upon her father and brother; but Ercole was to some extent in the secrets of Lodovico, the interests of his daughter Beatrice were at stake, and his son Ferrando was about to enter the French service. Guicciardini, indeed, accuses him of urging Lodovico on in his fatal course, hoping that, in the confusion that would result to Italy, he would recover the Polesine of Rovigo. He adds that many believed that, to avenge himself for Lodovico's share in the late peace of Bagnolo, through which that province had been wrested from him, he was wilfully striving to lead his son-in-law on to his ruin.² But this is altogether too Machiavellian

¹ Dispatches from Rome and Milan of January 20, 1493, and May 6, respectively. Cited by Balan, v. pp. 382, 383.

² *Storia d' Italia*, i. 2. Giovio similarly declares that Ercole shared all Lodovico's counsels, and abetted him in summoning the French. The documents cited by Balan prove that Frizzi's statement (iv. pp. 168, 169), that Ercole had opposed the Moro's policy and was included in the League without his own consent, is erroneous.

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and improbable. It seems, however, clear that Ercole knew of all the articles of the treaty, and accepted the place reserved for him in it. Among the minor Powers, the Republic of Siena and the Marquis of Mantua adhered to the League.

The King of Naples protested against the League—and still more against what he saw lying behind it—by the mouth of Antonio da Gennaro, whom he bade use in speaking to Lodovico “that charity which is worthy of us as a father towards him whom we hold for a son.” “We urge and exhort him,” he wrote, “with paternal affection and most cordial intention, to continue in his ancient customs, to keep before his eyes and in his heart the assured and mutual friendships of the past, nor depart from his usual wisdom. Let him think what Italy is, where she is placed, the quality of the States that are in her and near her, and the excessive evils whereof his Excellence might be the cause, if she be divided. The blind can see whether Italy has good neighbours by sea and land.”¹

Ostensibly for pleasure, in reality for purposes connected with the new League, Lodovico and Beatrice came to Ferrara on May 18, “*per puncto de astrologia*,” and had a most sumptuous reception. On the previous day, the news had just reached them that peace had been concluded between Charles and Maximilian, and that the former’s hands were therefore free. There were races and tournaments, dances in the ducal gardens, and, of course, the inevitable Plautine comedies, without which no entertainment seemed to Ercole to be complete. A week later, the day and hour likewise chosen by astrology, Leonora and

¹ Letter of April 24, 1493. Trinchera, ii. 1, p. 376.

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Beatrice, with Alfonso and Anna and the Marquis of Mantua, went to Venice; the two Dukes rode together to Belriguardo, thence to Mirandola and Carpi. At Venice, Beatrice was to communicate to the Doge some portion of her husband's designs.

Frantic became the efforts of King Ferrante to avert the tempest. On July 4, he wrote to Ercole, urging him to use his influence with Lodovico for peace and harmony: "from this thing most praiseworthy effects will follow; the disturbances that are now all over Italy will be stilled, and it will be easy to prevent any foreign nation from assailing her."¹ But at the beginning of August, partly by threats, partly by promising royal marriages for the Pope's children, Ferrante gained over Alexander, who abandoned the League and entered into an alliance with Naples. The King's exultation, however, proved premature. Although the French ambassador, Péron de Basche, arrived in Rome to demand the investiture of the Neapolitan kingdom for his master just a few days too late, the advisers of the French King were confident that, even without the Pope, they could carry out their design.²

The health of the Duchess Leonora was breaking down rapidly, and her malady was probably aggravated by the situation, her heart torn in twain between her affection for her daughter of Bari and her brother of Calabria, who seemed thus bent upon each other's ruin. She was very anxious, too, about her sister, Queen Beatrice of Hungary, whose husband was attempting to have the marriage declared

¹ Trinchera, ii. 2, p. 102.

² See the letter of September 18, 1493, from the Florentine ambassador, Francesco della Casa, to Piero de' Medici, from Tours. Desjardins, i. p. 256.

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null and void by the Papal Court. The Marchesana Isabella came in July to be near her mother, and stayed until August 10, the Duchess being utterly unable to let her go.¹ And, indeed, Leonora was destined never to see her favourite daughter again.

A few days later, Ercole set out for Pavia, at Lodovico's invitation, with a goodly company including Don Alfonso, and a band of young men to perform a series of comedies for the Sforza's pleasure. At Pavia, which they reached on August 25, they were received by the two Duchesses, Isabella of Milan and Beatrice of Bari; the latter was radiant with happiness and content, but her rival avoided the Ferrarese merry-makers, appearing only at the performances. Three comedies were played—the *Captivi*, the *Mercator*, and the *Poenulus*—on three successive days.² From Pavia, on August 30, Lodovico and Beatrice made an excursion to Milan with Ercole, to show him his little grandchild—or, as he more pompously styles it, "the most illustrious our *nipote*, son of the said Lord." They found the baby very flourishing, *tutto jocondo e piacevole*, and returned next day to join the rest at Pavia. Here they found Alfonso ill with fever, and decided, although Messer Francesco da Castello, the Court physician, did not think it was anything serious, to send him back to Ferrara in the bucentaur. But Lodovico, as usual, thought that the stars were at work, and that

¹ See the affectionate letter from Isabella to her sister-in-law, the Duchess Elisabetta of Urbino, July 26, 1493, in Luzio and Renier, *Mantova e Urbino*, p. 67. Elisabetta Gonzaga had married Duke Guidobaldo in 1488.

² Cf. Luzio and Renier, *Delle Relazioni di Isabella d'Este Gonzaga con Lodovico e Beatrice Sforza*, pp. 379, 380. As one of the actors was Lodovico Ariosto, I shall return to these festivities on another occasion.

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his trusted astrologer should be consulted. "Our intention," writes Ercole to Leonora, "was to send him off to-morrow, which will be Sunday; but when we communicated this our deliberation to the Lord Lodovico, his Excellence thought that, before he sets out, we should learn first from Maestro Ambrosio da Rosato, who will be here to-morrow morning, what would be a good day for his departure, and also if it will be necessary to bleed him before he starts."¹

During this stay in Lombardy, Ercole was much occupied with the preparations for the coming journey of Don Ferrando to France. At Lodovico's advice, he decided that the young prince had better go at once, without waiting for more definite information about the provision that he was to have from the Most Christian King. Writing on September 6, he tells Leonora to see that Ferrando and his company are ready, so that he may speed his son on his way, before he returns to Ferrara. He will see about the money for the journey; the plate is all in order, as her Ladyship knows. "As to the clothes for Don Ferrando to wear, it is not necessary that he should take many ready-made, because every day the fashion changes in France; but let him be given some silk stuffs to be made up when he has got there. I would remind your Ladyship that we have information that the French in their attire use black velvets, as also black silks and damask, and that they hardly use any other silk, excepting that, now and then, one sees there a jerkin of fine crimson silk." He adds minute details concerning the equipment of Ferrando's escort and train, beginning with

¹ Letter from Pavia, August 31, 1493. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*. Ambrogio da Rosciate, in addition to his astrology, was a skilful physician.

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four gentlemen "who have continually to eat with our son, because such is the custom in France and it will be an honourable thing." The numbers of attendants of all kinds are carefully defined, and the horses and mules to be appointed to each. Lodovico, indeed, had hinted that the thing was being done on too lavish a scale, and suggested that forty horses and mules would be enough; "but we thought that they should be forty-six, in order that he may go more honourably." For his own person, Ercole thinks his son is well supplied with horses; but he is content to give him two of his own, one of which, "Reale," was given him by the King [of Naples ?] and the other, "Roseghino," is good for exercising in the tilt-yard. Besides all these, four Ferrarese gentlemen, including Count Giovanni Boiardo and Messer Giulio Tassoni, are to accompany him and then return, and Lodovico will send Galeazzo Visconti well attended; "so that in his going there will be about eighty horses, and in this way we think that the company will be honourable, both in respect of those who are to stay with our son, and those who are to accompany him and then to return hither."¹

But, after this had gone on for a few days, the poor Duchess wrote piteously that she was really too ill to attend to any provision for Ferrando's departure, and Ercole put it into the hands of his brother Sigismondo instead, as he was anxious that there should be no delay. "Every day that at present is lost seems to us to be worth ten, considering that the bad weather is at hand with the winter." As to the day of the prince's starting, Leonora piously suggested that the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi would be suitable;

¹ *Minute Ducali.* Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi.*

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but both Ercole and Lodovico scouted the notion, and thought that a "lucky" day was needed for his affairs to prosper. Let her wait until Lodovico has heard from Maestro Ambrosio, to whom he has written to send them a good day.¹

Meanwhile, to Ercole's unbounded delight and mainly through Lodovico's influence, Ippolito had been raised to the Cardinalate in the consistory of September 20. His most reverend and illustrious lordship was not fifteen years old, and was still in his Hungarian archbishopric. Among the Cardinals simultaneously created (not to mention our own Archbishop Morton of Canterbury and others as worthy of the purple) were Cesare Borgia and Giulia's brother, Alessandro Farnese, "il cardinale della gonnella." Ippolito was the first of the House of Este to reach this dignity, and Ercole bade Leonora have public rejoicings all over the Duchy for this good tidings. In writing to her son, he instructed her, for the honour of the House, to address the letter "Cardinali Estensi," instead of "Cardinali Strigoniensi," as the more usual custom demanded.²

A few days later, an urgent letter from Sigismondo reached Ercole, telling him that Leonora had been growing steadily worse for three days. Ercole would have hurried to her bedside at the reception of the news—but Lodovico interposed with his astrology: "As soon as we received your letter, we should have started to come at once to Ferrara; but, because the conjunction of the moon will take place the day after to-morrow, it has seemed to the most illustrious

¹ Letters of September 21 and October 2, 1493, to Leonora. Archivio di Modena, *loc. cit.*

² Letters of September 22 and 26. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*.

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Lord Lodovico that we ought not to set out, because of that combustion." Nevertheless, he will hasten his departure, going from Milan by Pavia to Cremona, and from Cremona to Ferrara by ship, sending the horses by land by way of Mantua. At Cremona he will take leave of Don Ferrando, who is already on his way, and then hasten to Ferrara to see his wife.¹ He came too late, arriving at Ferrara on October 12, only to find that Leonora had died on the previous day. A messenger, who had been sent to hurry him, had missed him on the way.

All Ferrara believed she had died like a saint, consoled with celestial visions. She was buried quietly in the convent of the Corpus Domini, and the funeral was followed by numerous religious services for the repose of her soul, with great donations to the poor of the city. Ferrando hurried back to Ferrara, but was too late to be present at the funeral, and left again at once.²

"Not without grief of heart," wrote Ercole to Ippolito, "do we inform you that your dearest mother and our most illustrious consort yesterday evening, at about the twenty-third hour, died, having first received all the sacraments of Holy Church with the greatest contrition and devotion, and in full possession of her senses, hearing and speaking of spiritual and devout things. You must this time bear yourself in such a way that you be reputed a wise and pru-

¹ Letter to Sigismondo d' Este, of October 8, 1493. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*.

² *Diario Ferrarese*, coll. 286, 287. All contemporaries bear witness to Leonora's rare qualities of heart and mind, her boundless charity; "Acts," writes Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti, "that would make the adamantine gates of Paradise freely open" (*Gynевра de le Clave Donne*, ed. C. Ricci and A. Bacchi della Lega, p. 401). For her library, composed almost entirely of mystical books, see Bertoni, *op. cit.*, Appendix II. (1).

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dent Cardinal, a man and not a youth, and of a great soul and not weak, able to be steadfast in adversity as temperate in prosperity. Verily, this is a case to give evidence of the virtue of your disposition and of the constancy that a prelate of your rank should have, and one raised to such a dignity as is the Cardinalate.”¹

It is from the letters of the King of Naples that we realize what Leonora was to the State, and, indeed, in her he had lost his last friend in the counsels of the Powers of northern Italy. Besides the formal letter of condolence which he sent to the Duke, he wrote to his ambassador at Milan, Antonio da Gennaro, as though Ercole were reduced to helplessness by the loss. At the same time, reading between the lines, we see that he was prepared to take advantage of the occasion, to produce bad blood between Milan and Venice :—

“ In consequence of the death of the Duchess of Ferrara, our daughter, we have thought well to speak plainly with the ducal orator concerning the peril in which Ferrara stands from the Venetians, since the Duke is of the nature and age that he is, and the Venetians have the disposition that they have to take it for themselves. And, therefore, we have spoken right clearly, that he should urge the Duke of Bari to look to it and protect it, as he ought, since he is so near and bound by the duty of blood, both as son of the Duke and as father of his children. We have enlarged much upon this, for it seems to us that there is crying need ; and, because we feel certain that the Duke of Bari will make

¹ *Minute* of October 12, Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*. Malipiero's story of Leonora having been poisoned at Ercole's orders is a mere Venetian calumny, as absurd as it is atrocious. It is amazing to find that it is adopted by so serious a writer as Burckhardt.

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merchandise of this thing with the Venetian orator, we send you another letter together with the present, in order that you may in some discreet way come to speak with the Venetian orator in the tenor that is contained in the said letter, in order that, when he writes to Venice according to what the Duke of Bari will tell him, he may go more cautiously and not give too much faith to the words of the said Duke.”¹

The Marquis of Mantua had hurried to Ferrara on receipt of the ill tidings, but for some days the news was concealed from Isabella, who was expecting the birth of her child. On October 15, Benedetto Capiluppo, her secretary, wrote to the Marquis: “She began to perceive that she was being deceived, as she kept her eye upon every one, because it was eight days to-day since she had letters from Ferrara, and also because for three nights, according to what she has said, she had dreamed of the blessed soul of Madama.”² She heard at last by way of Milan, and controlled her grief for her child’s sake, much consoled by the presence of her dearest friend and more than sister, the Duchess Elisabetta. On the last day of this year Isabella gave birth to a daughter, to whom the name Leonora was given. “I shall renew in her,” wrote the Marchesana, “the name of the blessed memory of my most excellent mother;” but, in com-

¹ Letter of October 20, 1493. The other letter simply bids him commend Ferrara to Lodovico. Ferrante wrote similarly to Carlo Rugieri, his ambassador at Venice, bidding him recommend the affairs of Ferrara and of Alfonso to the Republic, but with dexterity, “showing that we are acting from love and confidence, not from any suspicion.” Trinchera, ii. 2, pp. 282, 283, 286, 288. The thing was a clumsy piece of diplomacy, probably due to the fact that the old King himself was breaking down.

² Luzio and Renier, *Delle Relazioni di Isabella d' Este Gonzaga con Lodovico e Beatrice Sforza*, p. 381.

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municating the news to her father and sister, she did not conceal her disappointment. It is ominous, in view of the great political tempest that was at hand, that the Gonzaga invited Lorenzo di Pier Francesco de' Medici—the enemy of Piero and head of the French faction in Florence—to act as godfather to “our little one,” and he was represented in Mantua by his more noted brother Giovanni.¹

On November 30 the marriage of Lodovico's niece, Bianca Maria Sforza, with Maximilian, King of the Romans, was celebrated at Milan—the bridegroom being represented by his two ambassadors, the Bishop of Brixen and Giovanni Buontempo. “All the streets from the Castle to the Duomo being decked and covered with the finest draperies,” writes Corio, “Bianca with Lodovico's wife Beatrice, mounted upon a triumphal chariot drawn by four pure white horses, was brought to the Duomo accompanied by the aforesaid ambassadors, by Gian Galeazzo, Lodovico Sforza, with all the feudatories of his empery, a goodly number of damsels, and by the more notable citizens. And when they had there heard the divine offices, by the two ambassadors with the fitting ceremonies was Bianca, in the name of the most serene King Maximilian, wedded as his bride; after which, crowned as Queen and mounted on horseback, in the midst of the public joy, she returned to the Castle, and after two days she set out to go to her desired spouse in Germany.”²

¹ See Luzio and Renier, *Mantova e Urbino*, pp. 68, note 3, 69, note 1. It was in this January, 1494, that Gentile Becchi from Tours wrote to Piero concerning these two: “Insino nel proprio sangue, vi trovate insidiatori” (Desjardins, i. p. 359).

² *Storia di Milano*, iii. p. 533. A long letter from Beatrice to the Marchesana Isabella, describing the marriage, will be found in Luzio and Renier, *Delle Relazioni di Isabella d'Este, etc.*, pp. 384-388, and is Englished by Mrs. Ady, *op. cit.*, pp. 211-216.

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Needless to say that Bianca's dowry of 400,000 ducats of gold was the bait wherewith the needy King of the Romans had been caught. Lodovico protested that by this union he himself would be *tanquam glutinum* of the peace between Charles and Maximilian.¹ But no one knew what would happen next, nor what the chief Italian States intended ; no one trusted the Pope ; the Florentines were anxious to keep neutral, though Piero favoured the Aragonese and there was a pro-French party ; the Venetians anticipated nothing but gain to themselves from the sufferings of the rest of Italy ; Ferrante still clung to the hope that Lodovico might unite with him in repelling the French invasion.

"In such disposition of men's minds and in such confusion of affairs, all tending to new perturbations, began the year 1494," writes Guicciardini, "a year most unhappy for Italy, and in very sooth the first year of miserable years ; for it opened the gate to innumerable and horrible calamities, of which it can be said that, through diverse accidents, a great part of the world afterwards shared in them." On January 17, Gentile Becchi announced to Piero de' Medici that the die was cast, and that the enterprise would certainly go forward. "If this war is checked in the Milanese district (for there will be no other opposition down to Naples), all Italy will take arms with Milan, I can tell you. But it must be lost or won. If it be lost, it is all up with Italy ; *tutta a bordello*." ² "What is the use of your warning the Lord Lodovico," he wrote a few days later, "of the danger in which he is putting himself and others ? Do you think that he does not know it ? You will make him more

¹ Letter from Francesco della Casa to Piero de' Medici, November 9, 1493. Desjardins, i. p. 261.

² Letter of January 17, 1494. Desjardins, i. p. 357.

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obstinate in his course, to make it seem that he has not made a mistake, or else he will send your letters here.”¹ Sick to death with apprehension, almost with his dying hand, King Ferrante wrote the epistle which may be read at length in the “Codice Aragonese,” announcing the downfall, not of his own House alone, but of all Italy: “Never did the French come into Italy without working her utter ruin, and this coming is of such a kind that it can clearly be seen to involve universal ruin, though it seems to threaten only us who are seeking, not merely to defend ourselves, but to avert the ruin.”² He died on January 25, and was succeeded by that Alfonso, whom we have hitherto known as the Duke of Calabria. On January 30, Gentile Becchi informed Piero that the King of France was coming in person to the enterprise of Naples. “See what a stranger we shall bring you home; see what a nag the Lord Lodovico has bought for himself from over here.”³ “You are always talking to me of this Italy,” quoth Il Moro, “and for my part I never saw her in the face.”⁴ In March, Charles arrived at Lyons, to take supreme command of the army. The Duke of Orleans with the French fleet reached Genoa; the Neapolitan fleet under the Prince of Altamura, Don Federigo, approached the Gulf of Spezia.

Nevertheless, some of the actors in this great historic drama found time for lighter amusements. “When I took leave of Madame de Bourbon,” wrote Francesco della Casa to Piero de’ Medici, “she called me back and told me to write to you for a civet-cat, that is the animal that makes

¹ Letter from Tours of January 22, 1494. Desjardins, i. p. 359.

² Letter of January 17, 1494. Trinchera, ii. 2, p. 421. The fateful word *ruina* runs through the passage like a refrain.

³ Letter of January 30, 1494. Desjardins, i. p. 360.

⁴ Villari, *Niccolò Machiavelli*, i. document 1.

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civet. I answered her that it was not found in those parts, but that, if there was one in Italy or elsewhere, your Magnificence would send it her. And when I told her that I remembered having seen some at Naples, she said to me that on no account would she have the King of Naples send her any. I answered that, either from Naples or from wherever it might be, you yourself would send her one, and so she prays your Magnificence to do, and she says that she has heard that there are some in Ferrara.”¹

Ercole followed with paternal affection all his son's actions in France, and kept up a constant correspondence with him. He was delighted to hear of the gracious reception he had received from the King and Queen, and urged him to follow up this good beginning with diligence and prudence. He thanks him for the news of the Court, touching the bearing of the King towards the Spanish ambassador and his disposition to attend to the enterprise of the Kingdom of Naples. Hearing that it would be well to present some “cose odorifere” to the King and Queen, but finding himself too badly provided with such things to be able to make such a present to their Royal Majesties as would be worthy of them and him, he sends him by the Count Baldissera da Montecuccolo “three grains of musk, two small, which are set as you will see, and one large one which is not otherwise set.” “We are sending them to you in order

¹ Letter of January 14, 1494, from Tours. Desjardins, i. p. 269. This “Madama de Bourbon” is, of course, Anne of Beaujeu, who, a few years before, had tried to wheedle Piero's father out of his giraffe (see Armstrong, *Lorenzo de' Medici*, pp. 232, 233). On December 3, 1493, Francesco della Casa had written from Amboise: “At this moment the Duke of Ferrara has entered, with about a hundred horses, right honourably, and the King will give him a good provision” (Desjardins, i. p. 267). This is obviously a slip for Don Ferrando.

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that you may be able to make presents with them on your own account (*da vui ve ne potiate fare honore*), showing that you have had something from home. Those two little ones you can give, if you think fit, to two of those principal great ladies, one for instance to the Duchess of Bourbon, and the other to the Duchess of Orleans, and that bigger one you could give from yourself to that most serene Queen, without giving it in our name. We have not thought well to have it set, because we do not quite know the way they have over there of setting such things. And so, likewise, you could give to his Majesty two horns of civet, which we are sending you by the said Count Baldissera, in the way that we have told you." He sends him other odours and perfumes to dispose of as he likes; two falcons for himself; certain "goodly moulds of cheese" and salame. If he gives these latter away, he must do it as from himself, and not present them in the Duke's name.¹ But presently comes a paternal lecture. His Excellence is very much displeased to hear that his son gives himself much to ease, and does not use fitting diligence "in following and serving the Majesty of that Most Christian King." He has sent him to France that he may make himself good for something, and urges him to throw all his soul into the service of the King. "We know that you have plenty of talent and that you know what your duty is, and that, if you wish, you can do yourself credit."²

It was probably in April that the people of Ferrara began to realize what was on foot. A French ambassador had

¹ *Minute Ducali* to Don Ferrando, January 14, February 15, 16, 17, 1494. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*. The two last may be said to give a Renaissance anticipation of the modern English schoolboy's hamper from home.

² Letter of April 8, 1494. Archivio di Modena, *loc. cit.*

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arrived, with some sixty persons in his train ; he stayed a couple of days, the Duke escorting him on his way with great state and ceremony. " There was much talk about the war," writes the Diarist, " and it was said that this ambassador had come about it." ¹

Ercole, in spite of the Pope's threat to excommunicate him if he did so, had promised to allow the French forces with their Italian allies to pass through his duchies of Reggio and Modena, and to supply them with provisions at a suitable price. This was, however, only a small portion of the invading army—those merely who were to pass through Romagna and enter the Abruzzi across the Tronto. At the end of July, the passage began ; first came five hundred Italians, under the Count of Caiazzo. They grossly maltreated the people on their way, and, when a larger force of the " men-at-arms of France and Milan " prepared to march through in August, Ercole wrote emphatically to Lodovico, describing the terror of his subjects, urging him instantly to write to the Count of Caiazzo to take measures to prevent a repetition of these outrages. ²

In September, Charles himself arrived at Asti. Lodovico and Ercole met him, knelt and kissed his hand, while the ungainly little monarch remained mounted. At Asti the King lingered a month, laid up with what is charitably supposed to have been smallpox. In October he began his advance, Ercole presenting him with richly-worked tents and pavilions. At Pavia, the hapless Duchess Isabella threw herself at the royal feet, imploring protection for her husband, mercy for her kindred of Naples. It is too late,

¹ *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 288.

² He wrote also on the same day to Trotti, urging him to see that the letter to the Count was worded effectually and sent at once. Archivio di Modena, *Minutario Cronologico*, August 2, 1494.

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muttered the Most Christian King. Hardly had he passed on, than Duke Gian Galeazzo died. Lodovico, on receipt of the tidings, left the King at Piacenza and hurried to Milan, to have himself proclaimed Duke. The King, anxious and suspicious, waited a few days at Piacenza, then proceeded on his way through Lunigiana and Tuscany. The story of his triumphal march, the collapse of the Aragonese resistance, the flight of Piero de' Medici, the entry into Florence and Rome, need not be repeated here.

On the news that Gian Galeazzo was dying, Ercole had hastened to Milan, to lend his assistance in securing the succession for Lodovico and Beatrice. On his way, he addressed a severe rebuke to Don Alfonso, whom he had left at Ferrara, as regent:—

“ To-day, before we started from Ferrara, we asked for you, and had search made for you, because we wished to give you some directions and to tell you how you were to bear yourself in our absence ; and we could not have you, because you had gone out of the town. This thing has greatly displeased us, because, while we were at Ferrara, you ought not to have gone away, nor done such things without our express leave. And, therefore, we have thought well to write this letter to you at once, to tell you that in this absence of ours you must govern yourself better than you did last month, when we went into Lombardy ; for you did exactly the contrary to what we committed to you. Our intention was that you should give audience and that you should eat in public, in such wise that all the people could see you and speak to you ; but you ate in secret and in remote places, showing that you had little care for the business that you should have had at heart, and also that you did not much esteem our commissions. You can believe that

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this has offended us. Therefore, while we are away, you must govern yourself properly, giving audience to the people and eating in public, and attending to the examinations ordered, and doing all those other things which are befitting to you and which you know to be our will, so that we may hear a different report of you from what we heard the other time. If you do so, you will do your duty, and a thing which will be pleasure to us and honour to yourself ; whereas if you do otherwise, we shall be very angry with you and grievously offended thereat. Remember that we shall hear right well how you behave yourself, just as we heard that other time.”¹

But we must turn now to the noblest victim of this year of shame, to Ercole's Governor in Reggio, Matteo Maria Boiardo.

¹ Letter dated Finale, October 20, 1494. Archivio di Modena, *Minutario Cronologico*. Gian Galeazzo died on the morning of October 21. His contemporaries for the most part believed that he had been poisoned by Lodovico, but this is no longer accepted by modern historians.

Chapter VIII

MATTEO MARIA BOIARDO

SCANDIANO lies some eight miles south-east of Reggio, at the very foot of the Apennines, where the Tresinaro flows down from the hills to swell presently the Secchia near Rubiera. The little town itself, with its quiet streets and arcaded square, is quaint and picturesque. The whole of one corner of it is occupied by the Rocca, the great castle of its feudal counts. Built originally after the middle of the thirteenth century by Giberto Fogliani, it sheltered Petrarca in 1343, when on his way to Reggio from Parma, and in the following centuries was enlarged by the Boiardi, into whose hands it came in 1423. Scandiano is backed by pleasant hills, upon one of which stands the "Torricella," known now as the Castello Cugini, where the greatest of the Boiardi lived and wrote in the summer months. Climb a little higher, and suddenly a complete revelation breaks upon you of the whole sweeping chain of Apennines to south and west, while below your feet the great cities of the Emilian plain appear here and there, just visible in the misty distance. This enchanted spot should be visited on a bright summer morning. The whole hillside is quick with the flight of swarms of great butterflies—black and golden Machaon mingling with its swifter, paler cousin, tiger-striped Podalirius, in mimic warfare. In these paladins

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of the insect world a believer in the transmigration of souls might almost dream that he saw the fantastic glittering heroes of whom Reggio's two poets sang.

The Boiardi were citizens of Reggio and feudal lords of Rubiera until 1423, when Feltrino Boiardo—whom we have already met—ceded the latter lordship to the Marchese Niccolò and received Scandiano instead, with other smaller townlets and the title of Count. Feltrino married Guiduccia, the daughter of Count Gherardo da Correggio, by whom he had two sons, Giovanni and Giulio Ascanio. Giovanni married Lucia Strozzi, the sister of Tito Vespasiano, by whom he had one son, Matteo Maria, and four daughters; Giulio Ascanio married Cornelia Taddea, the sister of Marco Pio da Carpi, by whom he had a son, Giovanni. One of Feltrino's daughters, Giulia, married Gian Francesco Pico della Mirandola, who made her the mother of the famous Giovanni and of Galeotto Pico. Two others married into the Rangoni family of Modena.

Matteo Maria Boiardo was born, like Dante, under the constellation of the Gemini (as he tells us in one of his sonnets) in the early summer of 1434, probably in the castle of Scandiano, where his grandfather kept a splendid Court, the Boiardi being famous for their hospitality. The greater part of the poet's boyhood was passed in Ferrara and its neighbourhood. Leonello d' Este had made the Count Giovanni independent of his father, by granting him certain tolls and duties which had hitherto been reserved to the Crown in the townlets of Feltrino's fief; and on Giovanni's death, in 1452, Borso—who, on the occasion of his triumphal progress through his duchies, stayed at Scandiano as the guest of the Boiardi, and renewed Feltrino's investiture, adding Casalgrande and other places to his fiefs—confirmed this

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privilege to Matteo Maria. The old Count and Countess appear to have resented this; and in their wills (Feltrino died in 1456, Guiduccia in 1457), on the plea that this embarrassed the feudatory, they compelled Matteo Maria to share these profits with his uncle, Giulio Ascanio, under pain of losing his portion of the inheritance.¹ Throughout the poet's life, there seems to have been this bad feeling, blazing out at intervals, at other times latent, between him and his father's family; while his relations with his mother's house, the Strozzi, were always of the most cordial character. His uncle appears to have governed the fiefs after Feltrino's death, and the young poet is completely ignored in all the official letters of the Boiardi. He probably fell much under the influence of Tito Vespasiano Strozzi, and perhaps spent these years in Ferrara, with the humanists and courtiers. In February, 1460—on the death of Giulio Ascanio—he first comes forward as the feudal lord, *Comes Scandiani et Casalgrandis*, in a letter to Count Silvio di San Bonifazio, Captain of Reggio, announcing the death of his uncle, or, as he puts it, "that it hath pleased our Creator to call to Himself the blessed soul of my good father, Messer Giulio."² But even now Giulio's widow, the Countess Cornelia Taddea, an ambitious and overbearing woman, shared the title and the administration of the fiefs of the House.

Boiardo appears to have passed the next eight or nine years of his life mainly at Scandiano, in the midst of the scenery he so loved, playing the part of feudal lord,

¹ These details from G. Ferrari, *Notizie della vita di Matteo Maria Boiardo*, in the *Studi su Matteo Maria Boiardo*, pp. 6-9.

² Letter of February 8, 1460. Campanini, p. 367. Casalgrande is a small place south of Scandiano, just off the road to Sassuolo, at the foot of the hills.

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hunting and entertaining, and much engaged in the somewhat prosaic affairs of the waters of the Secchia—a standing source of contention between the Boiardi and the Commune of Reggio, which latter city derived its water supply from a canal from that stream. “This water is our very life,” the Ancients wrote to Cornelia Taddea some years later. A further complication was added by Cornelia’s kinsmen, the Pio of Carpi, who also disputed the rights of the good citizens of Reggio. There is still extant a whole series of Boiardo’s letters connected with this dispute, which on his part was always conducted with the utmost generosity and courtesy. On one occasion the matter was referred to Duke Borso himself, who wrote back, somewhat sharply, that the disputants must settle the thing promptly, and not trouble him about it. Only two letters from Boiardo to Borso have been preserved. One, of September, 1462, concerns the question of the canal; the other, of February, 1466, excuses the writer for not having already gone to explain to Borso by word of mouth “about the affair of those women,” on the grounds that “the Magnificent Count Giovanni Francesco della Mirandola, my uncle, has written to me that he wishes to come to Scandiano for a few days to amuse himself, and so I have been expecting him.”¹ Although high in favour with the Duke, whose benign bearing towards himself he records in one of his sonnets, a far warmer devotion united Boiardo with Ercole d’Este. After the recall of the latter from Naples in 1462 and his appointment as ducal governor of the Duchy of Modena, Boiardo was a constant visitor to the latter city, as also to the smaller Court that Sigismondo held in Reggio. In January, 1469, he was summoned

¹ Letter of February 15, 1466. Campanini, p. 378.

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to Ferrara to form part of the escort of the Emperor Frederick, returning to Scandiano before the beginning of April.

This appears to have been a bright and peaceful epoch in Boiardo's life. To it belong his first two works: the Latin eclogues, or *Pastoralia*; the Italian lyrics, or *Canzoniere*.

The *Pastoralia* are Boiardo's first attempts to win the Muses. They are ten in number, according to the Virgilian precedent, and show a closer imitation of Virgil's eclogues than we find in Dante's correspondence with Giovanni del Virgilio or in the Latin poetry of Petrarca. They appear to have been composed between 1458 and 1463, the latter date appearing from the references to the return of Ercole and his presence at Modena. The subjects are partly amorous, partly political and heroic, dealing with the pacific reign of Borso and the martial exploits of Ercole in Apulia. Perhaps the most remarkable is the fourth, entitled *Vasilicomantia*, a kind of imitation of Virgil's famous *Pollio*, in which the golden age of Borso's rule is depicted in glowing colours, and a glimpse is shown in the background of the struggle between Aragonese and Angevin for the possession of the Regno, with the Turkish Hydra lurking in the distance. The tenth, *Orpheus*, is in an exceedingly laudatory strain, addressed to Ercole himself, offering up the little collection to him, promising greater poetic gifts in the future. It is hard to blame adulation, when friendship and admiration alike are so genuine and sincere.

The *Canzoniere*, that comes next in the chronological order of Boiardo's work, is a far more remarkable achievement. In its rhythmic variety and lyrical beauty, it is

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the finest collection of love poems written by any Italian during the fifteenth century. The love that it sets forth is mainly of the most chivalrous and ideal description; there is considerably less of tangible yearning than we find, for instance, in Petrarca's *Rerum Vulgarium Fragmenta*. The object of the Count's admiration appears undoubtedly to have been a real woman, Antonia Caprara, who was probably Antonia di Bartolommeo Caprari, a girl of Reggio who was born in 1451, and whom he worships thus in song from April, 1469 (the real or fictitious date of the beginning of his love being the fourth of that month), until the spring of 1471. At times he turns to celebrating the beauties of a mysterious *Rosa*, which is most probably not the name of a woman (as some have supposed), but merely a poetic symbol for Antonia. Two other ladies are addressed in some of the poems, as confidantes of his devotion for Antonia: Marietta and Ginevra Strozzi, the former being the wife of Teofilo Calcagnino. These lyrics are divided into three books, *Amorum Libri*; the first deals with the poet's joys in love; the second with his sorrows; in the third, old desires are overcome, and he gradually passes out of the amorous prison-house into another field. They consist of sonnets, various kinds of canzoni, different forms of madrigals, and other lyrics of peculiar metrical structure, some of them of considerable length and great originality. They show comparatively little of the frigid conventions and mannerisms of the Petrarchists, but are for the most part as fresh and musical as the best lyrical work of the poets of the *dolce stil nuovo*. And for so learned a poet and one so steeped in classicism, so in touch with the humanists, Boiardo's use of mythology is refreshingly sparing and never dragged in for mere parade. He is already dreaming of enchanted

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gardens and eternal spring, in the spirit of his coming romance.

The larger lyrics are, perhaps, his greatest achievement in this kind.¹ For our present purpose it must suffice to quote two sonnets. The one gives admirable expression to the first exultation of the successful lover :—

Qualunque più de amar fu schiffo in pria,
E dal camin de Amor più dilungato,
Cognosca l' alegreza del mio stato,
E tornerase a la amorosa via.
Qualunque in terrá ha più quel ch' ei disia,
Di forza, senno, e di belleza ornato ;
Qualunque sia nel mondo più beato,
Non se pareggia a la fortuna mia.
Chè il legiadro desire, e la vaghezza
Che dentro mi riluce nel pensiero,
Me fan tra l' altre gente singulare.
Tal che io non stimo la indica richeza,
Nè del gran re di Scyti il vasto impero,
Che un sol piacer de amor non può aguagliare.²

¹ See, for instance, *Canz.* lxxxii., addressed to the Strozzi ladies, and the peculiarly constructed *Canz.* civ. It may here be observed that in the British Museum MS. (*Egerton MS.*, 1999), dated January 4, 1477—a manuscript which was probably written under the poet's personal superintendence, or at least at his commands (cf. Solerti, *Le Poesie Volgari e Latine di M. M. Boiardo*, p. xiv.)—the metrical definitions and other Latin titles are not prefixed to the poems. These rubrics and headings do, however, appear in the Bodleian manuscript (No. 47 in Mortara's catalogue), as also in the *editio princeps* (Reggio, 1499), and may plausibly be referred to Boiardo himself. Besides the "esemplari rarissimi" cited by Solerti (*op. cit.*, p. xviii.), there is a copy of this edition in the Grenville Library.

² "Whoso before shunned loving most, and kept furthest off from the path of Love, let him know the bliss of my state, and he will return to the amorous way.

"Whoso on earth hath most what he desires, adorned with power, wisdom and beauty, whoso in the world is most blessed, cannot compare with my good fortune.

"For the gallant desire, and the loveliness that within me glows back in my thought, make me stand alone among mankind ; so that I esteem not the wealth of India, nor the vast empire of the

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The other repeats, but with an entirely different accent, a note already struck in one of the most justly celebrated canzoni of Petrarca :—

Ecco la pastorella mena al piano
 La bianca torma ch' è sotto sua guarda,
 Vegendo il Sol calare, e l' ora tarda,
 E fumar l' alte ville di luntano.
 Erto se leva lo arratore insano,
 E il giorno fugitivo intorno guarda,
 E scioglie il jugo a' bovi, che non tarda
 Per gire al suo riposo a mano a mano.
 Et io soletto, senza alcun soggiorno,
 De' mei pensier co' il Sol sosta non have,
 E con le stelle a sospirar ritorno.
 Dolcie affanno d' amor, quanto êi suave :
 Chè io non poso la notte e non al giorno,
 E la fatica eterna non me è grave !¹

A religious note makes itself heard at intervals, even in the first of the three books, which, though perhaps caught from Petrarca, need not necessarily for that reason be insincere. Many of Petrarca's co-religionists, without being poets, have probably repeated to themselves his famous sonnet of *pentimento* in Holy Week. At the close of the third book comes the summons to Rome—as we know, in 1471, to attend on Borso in his coronation. The poet

Scythian King, that cannot equal one sole delight of Love.” (*Canz.* lii.)

¹ “Lo, the shepherdess leads to the plain the white flock that is under her charge, seeing the sun sinking and the hour late, and the mountain hamlets smoking from afar.

“The wild ploughman raises himself erect, and looks round at the flying day, and loosens the oxen from the yoke, hastening at once to go to his repose.

“And I alone, without any resting-place, have no pause from my thoughts with the sun, and return to sigh with the stars. So sweet is Love's gentle torment, that I rest not night nor day, and the eternal labour is not grievous to me.” (*Canz.* clii.)

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professes the utmost sorrow in being thus compelled to leave *il bel volto* (Antonia) and his *signore* (Ercole), and sings the pains of parting at rather unnecessary length, consoled somewhat (so at least a sonnet says) by seeing the former turn pale and weep. But a more solemn note is struck at his first sight of the Eternal City, *in prospectu Romae* :—

Ecco l' alma città che fu regina
Da l' unde Caspe a la terra Sabea ;
La triomfal città che impero avea
Dove il Sol se alza insin là dove inchina.
Or levo fato e sententia divina
Sì l' han mutata a quel ch' esser solea,
Che, dove quasi al ciel equal surgea,
Sua grande alteza copre ogni ruina.
Quando fia adunque più cosa terrena
Stabile e ferma ? poi che tanta altura
Il tempo e la fortuna a terra mena.
Come posso io sperar già mai sicura
La mia promessa ? Chè io non credo a pena
Che un giorno intiero amore in donna dura.¹

He confesses to a certain Battista that his love is unaltered and unalterable, even amidst these new surroundings and the festivities of Borso's reception. Had time or place the power to change or free him from his bonds, perchance Rome would have done so :—

Ma nè festa regal, nè molto joco,
Nè del mio Duca la benegna cera,

¹ “ Behold the blessed city that was queen from the Caspian waves to the land of Saba ; the triumphant city, that held empire from where the sun rises even to where he sets.

“ Now fickle fate and divine decree have changed her so from what she was wont to be, that, where she rose almost equal to Heaven, all ruin covers her mighty height.

“ When then shall any earthly thing more be stable and firm, since time and fortune bring such great glory to earth ? How can I ever hope to have my promise safe ? For hardly believe I that love lasts in woman one whole day.” (*Canz.* clxix.)

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Nè in tanti giorni questa terra altera,
M' hanno ancor tratto de l'usato foco.¹

Presently he declares that all his hope is still in Ercole, "my gentle lord," and in "the fair face where still my heart hath rest." Then come sonnets of repentance and renunciation of love. They are somewhat conventional in expression, but there is no reason for doubting that Rome had a solemnizing effect upon the mind of the sensitive poet. And, after an allegorical canzone on the treacheries and deception of passion, he turns for aid and pardon to the "King of the stars, eternal and immortal." This concluding sonnet, however, is not in any sense a renunciation of love, but a general confession of human sin and frailty on the part of the writer. He was still to glorify love in the *Orlando* :—

Amor primo trovò le rime e' versi,
I suoni, i canti ed ogni melodia,
E genti istrane e popoli dispersi
Congiunse amore in dolce compagnia :
Il diletto e il piacer sarian sommersi,
Dove amor non avesse signoria ;
Odio crudele e dispietata guerra,
Se amor non fusse, avrian tutta la terra.²

A new epoch in Boiardo's life and work begins with his return from Rome and the accession to the throne of his friend Ercole, in 1471. He was probably present in Ferrara

¹ " But neither royal festivity, nor much delight, nor the gracious bearing of my Duke, nor in so many days this noble town, has yet drawn me from the wonted fire." (*Canz.* cixxi.)

² " Love first found rhymes and verses, music, songs, and all melody ; strange folk and scattered nations hath Love conjoined in sweet company. Delight and pleasure would be drowned, if Love had not his sovereignty ; cruel hate and pitiless war, if Love were not, would possess all the earth." (*Orl. Inn.*, II. iv. 2.)

at the overthrow of the Veleschi—an event which he hailed in a series of exultant epigrams.¹ His love for Antonia Caprara was now a thing of the past, and in the following year he married Taddea Gonzaga, the daughter of Count Giorgio of the Gonzaga of Novellara.

Attempts have been made to weave a romance round Boiardo's marriage. A curious allegorical poem in *terza rima*—the sixth of his Italian eclogues—undoubtedly belongs to this epoch of his life. In it an impassioned hunter is wearied to death with pursuing a *capro formoso*, a lovely goat, than which “a more beauteous never Jason saw in Crete, nor the Trojan youth in the wood on Ida,” and of which he is desperately enamoured; but the fair creature proves inaccessible. “That is the goat of Pan, our god,” and a shepherd shows him the way instead to a mysterious white marble fountain, where he may slake this fire in the “sweetest and clearest water of the world,” though Love is hidden in the trees above it, and shoots through the boughs at all who approach. It has been plausibly suggested that this is an allegory of the poet's marriage, and that the shepherd, in whose pastoral costume the hunter is to approach the fountain, is Count Giorgio Gonzaga.² Be that as it may, Boiardo's bride was received in triumph

¹ They are eight in number (pp. 473–475) in Solerti's edition. One of the shortest will serve as example:—

Quid juvat haec garula contendere voce profani
Veligeri, et cunctis dicere vela viris,
Cum tribuant regem, dyamantaque numina clament,
Cum dominum Alcidem mundus et astra velint?

² Guido Mazzoni, on the *Ecloghe Volgari*, in the *Studi su M. M. Boiardo*, pp. 335–340. The poem has the rubric: “in the sixth Eclogue a wearied hunter and a shepherd speak in allegory, hiding their names even as the matter is hidden.” The reference to Pan is an echo from Petrarca's sonnet, *Una candida cerva*: “Liberà farmi al mio Cesare parve.”

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at Scandiano ; he appears to have been deeply attached to her, and the marriage proved a happy one.

In 1473, Boiardo was one of the splendid company that Ercole sent to Naples, to bring Leonora of Aragon to Ferrara. This was the first of many important affairs of State in which he was employed by his new sovereign.

In September, 1473, a violent quarrel had broken out between the municipality of Reggio and the Pio of Carpi, the subject being, of course, the endless question of the water supply of the city and the canal. The Pio even went so far as to send an armed force to cut off the water, and Boiardo, who had promptly offered his assistance to the Ancients to defend the rights of the city, appears to have driven back his aunt's kindred by force, *vi et armis*. Whether this had anything to do with what followed, or whether the Countess was actuated by the desire to secure the whole of the Boiardo fiefs and territory to her own son Giovanni (who was always hostile to his cousin and cruelly robbed his family after his death), we cannot say. But it seems fairly certain that, at the beginning of 1474, Count Marco Pio himself, her brother, with her own active connivance, suborned two men to take Matteo's life by poison. One of these two was a trusted servant of the poet, *un suo caro famiglio* ; the other was a notary, Simone Boioni, either his or Giovanni's chancellor, a fellow whom Matteo Maria had loaded with benefits and marks of favour. The *famiglio*, whose name does not appear, was to go to Carpi, get the poison from Count Marco, and then, apparently, Simone was to administer it. But when the time came for the man to start, either his courage failed him or he repented, and he revealed the whole to his master, who prepared a dramatic coup worthy of the

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author of the *Orlando*. He arranged things so as to overhear the instructions of the Countess to her ministers and fellow-criminals, and let the repentant servant carry out his part of the design and go to Carpi for the poison. Then, when he had all the evidence in his hands, Boiardo called to horse, and, with the servant and Simone in his train, hastened to Ferrara, and related the whole plot to the Duke. Simone was at once hurled into the dungeons of the Castle; the poison was tested and found deadly. Count Marco was summoned to the ducal presence, and placed under arrest.¹ Probably, Boiardo himself refused to take any proceedings against the Countess; there is no evidence that she was in any way called to account, though it was known and admitted that she had been her brother's accomplice.

This complete escape of the principals from chastisement was, perhaps, common enough in those aristocratic days; but Boiardo, with a magnanimity worthy of the *cortesia* of one of his own paladins, obtained that the same grace should be extended to the actual instruments. Simone's brother, Boione Boioni, who had also enjoyed his favour, was one of the Ancients of Reggio, and he prevailed upon the Commune to intercede for his brother with Matteo Maria himself and with the Duke. On February 14, the Ancients wrote to Boiardo a piteous appeal on behalf of "our poor and unhappy fellow-citizen." "It would

¹ Our only authority for the details of the plot is a letter dated March 23, 1474, in the Milanese Archivio di Stato, from Antonio da Correggio, "Count and ducal counsellor," brother-in-law of Feltrino Boiardo, to the Duke of Milan, Galeazzo Maria. It is given by Ferrari, *op cit.*, pp. 34-35. The other documents were first printed by A. Catelani in his pamphlet, *Sopra un attentato alla vita del Conte Matteo Maria Boiardo* (Reggio, 1891).

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seem a hard thing to ordinary men to pardon so great an atrocity ; but to men of the greatness and of the generosity of soul as is your Magnificence, it is a natural and easy thing to forgive the whole and consign it to oblivion.” They sent another appeal for mercy to the Duke, and fervently commended their envoy and the cause of the prisoner to the clemency and mildness of Boiardo himself. The worthy citizens knew their man. The horrible penalties of the law for poisoners were commuted into banishment, and even this was soon remitted. On November 2, 1474, the would-be poisoner wrote from Bagnolo to the Ancients, expressing his ardent desire to return home. The Ancients had already petitioned Ercole for a complete pardon, and Simone implored them to write on his behalf to Boiardo, to beg him to write to the Duke and intercede for his return. This appears to have been done ; Simone was restored to his country, and allowed to fill the honourable offices of the Commune, as if nothing had happened. The Duke only insisted that he should pay the costs of one of the lawyers employed in the case ! He even sat in the Council of the Forty in Reggio while Boiardo was governor of the city.¹ Nevertheless, the poet afterwards bore the legal profession a grudge :—

Attendi a la giustizia,
E ben ti guarda da procuratori,
E giudici e notai ; chè han gran tristizia,
E pongono la gente in molti errori.
Stimato assai è quel ch' ha più malizia,
E gli avvocati sono anche peggiori,
Che voltano le leggi a lor parere ;
Da lor ti guarda, e farai tuo dovere.²

¹ Catelani, *op. cit.* ; Ferrari, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-33.

² “ Attend to justice, and beware of procurators and judges and

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The Duke, hoping to heal the feud in the family, offered to give Matteo Maria double in the Duchy of Ferrara, if he would relinquish Scandiano. But the poet naturally declined. In 1475, the dominions of the Boiardi were divided between him and Giovanni—the latter having Casalgrande and Arceto with three smaller places,¹ Matteo Maria being henceforth Count of Scandiano alone. He left the neighbourhood of Reggio for a while after this attempt on his life, and, from 1475 to 1478, stayed with his family at Ferrara, in a palace still indicated in the Via Ripa Grande, filling some position at the Court of Ercole. In his absence, the Countess Cornelia Taddea and her son made themselves disagreeable to the people of Reggio, and the question of the water supply from the Secchia pursued him even to the capital. In a letter to the Ancients of Reggio from Ferrara, on this endless theme, Boiardo professes himself entirely at their service, prays them to use the places of his dominion as though it were their own district: "If I were the Emperor, I should wish to be a Reggian, obedient to and well-loved by my native city."² At the same time, he was engaged in literary work, translating Herodotus from the Greek (of which he knew a little, but not enough for his task), and writing a sort of abbreviation of the *Golden Ass* of Apuleius. He had already begun his great poem of *Orlando Innamorato*, which he probably read aloud as he proceeded, canto by canto, to the Duke and the courtly gatherings of the capinotaries; for they are a wicked set, and lead folk into many errors; he who has most malice is much esteemed, and even worse are the lawyers, who wrest the laws to their opinion. Beware of them, and thou shalt do thy duty." (*Orl. Inn.*, II. xxviii. 51.)

¹ Arceto is down in the plain on the other side of the Tresinaro.

² Letter of August 2, 1477. Campanini, p. 384.

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tal, the *Signori e dame e bella baronia* of his preludes.¹ To these and the few following years, before the outbreak of the disastrous Venetian war, belong the first two parts of the poetical romance.

From the beginning of 1481 to the end of 1482, Matteo Maria was ducal captain of Modena—the most turbulent and factious city of the Estensian dominions. Hardly was he arrived there when, in February, he had to put down a tumult with a strong hand, and to send for some hundred or so of his own armed retainers from Scandiano, to secure the punishment of the chief offenders, whom he had hanged from a window of the governor's palace.² A letter of his to the Duke on April 27 of the following year, just before the outbreak of hostilities with Venice and the Church, gives a vivid picture of the times and of the poet's own mildness of disposition. In consequence of the murder of a certain Centauro da Mocogno and his companions, the whole of the Frignano, the mountainous region to the south-west of Sassuolo, is up in arms, part on one side, part on the other, and blood has already been shed. It is useless sending the captain of the district to the disturbed area with twenty or thirty men, because the people are not afraid of him, and so many are concerned that punishment is out of the question. The writer's suggestion is that the Duke should hold out hopes of a complete pardon to every one involved, and so bring the factions to some sort of peace.

¹ Feltrino Boiardo had previously translated the *Golden Ass*, as we learn from the *De Politia Litteraria*, i. 6. Is Matteo Maria's version, perhaps, merely a revision of his grandfather's work? In March, 1479, according to the documents discovered by Bertoni, *op. cit.*, pp. 26, 27, the copyists of the Duke were at work upon both the *Orlando* and the translation of the *Golden Ass*.

² Jacopino de' Bianchi, *Cronaca Modenese*, i. pp. 47, 48.

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Like the other ducal representatives, Boiardo has been examining the artillery of the various forts and castles, evidently to see what can be spared for the defence of Ferrara itself, and the singer of jousts and paladins is delightfully vague about these more modern implements of war. "In your Rocca of Castellarano your most illustrious Lordship has five or six iron cannons; very long, fine and good, according to their kind. I believe that Count Lorenzo Strozza had them made. I do not know whether I should call them *bombarde* or *spingarde*, not to make a mistake; but they seem to me good enough cannon. If you should need them, you know where they are."¹

During the earlier stages of the war, Boiardo was certainly at Modena. He was probably still there in November and December, when serious riots broke out in the city and district, in consequence of the conveying of food stuffs by the canal in boats to famine-stricken Ferrara. A number of houses and palaces were sacked by the hungry mob, while the *contadini* rose in arms, plundered villas and buildings in the suburbs, and threatened the gates.²

The poet probably saw active service in the war. In the following year, 1483, we find him sometimes at Reggio and Scandiano, sometimes with the Duke in the capital. He had finished the first and second books of the *Orlando*, and laid down the pen with a sigh, on the outbreak of a real war instead of the mimic warfare of his song:—

Non saran sempre i tempi sì diversi,
Che mi traggan la mente di suo loco;
Ma, nel presente, i canti miei son persi,
E porvi ogni pensier mi giova poco;

¹ Letter of April 27, 1482. Campanini, p. 385.

² Jacopino de' Bianchi, pp. 67-71.

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Sentendo Italia di lamenti piena,
Non che ora canti, ma sospiro appena.

A voi, leggiadri amanti e damigelle,
Che dentro a' cor gentili avete amore,
Son scritte queste istorie tanto belle,
Di cortesia fiorite e di valore ;
Ciò non ascoltàn queste anime felle,
Che fan guerra per sdegno e per furore.
Addio, amanti e dame peregrine,
A vostro onor di questo libro è il fine.¹

But he could not quite doff his singing-robes, so turned to celebrating certain phases and episodes of the war, in Italian eclogues in *terza rima*.

Five of Boiardo's eclogues refer to the war, more particularly to the middle phase of the struggle. And we may, perhaps, imagine that their recitation enlivened the sick-room of Duke Ercole. In the first, the shepherd Tytiro—who is evidently Tito Vespasiano Strozzi—bewails the ravages of the Nemean monster and the destruction of his own beautiful villa by the sea.² But Mopso (Boiardo himself) reads upon the trunk of Apollo's sacred tree a prophecy, imitated in parts from Dante's of the *Veltro*. A mighty leader, *inclyto duce*, who has already delivered Italy from the Turks, shall put to flight "Dalmatians and Slavonians and their viler lords"; with his aid, Ercole

¹ "Not always will the times be so discordant as to draw my mind from its place. But, at present, my songs are lost, and to devote my thoughts to them avails me little; hearing Italy full of lamentation, I scarcely sigh now, much less sing.

"To you, winsome lovers and damsels, who have love within your gentle hearts, are written these goodly stories, adorned with courtesy and valour. Those fell souls do not hearken to them, who make war for disdain and for fury. Addio, lovers and beautiful ladies, to your honour is the end of this book." (*Orl. Inn.*, II. xxxi. 49, 50.)

² Cf. Mazzoni, *op. cit.*, p. 328.

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shall hunt back the savage Lion to the seashore whence it came. In the second, the nymph Galatea rises up from the Po and sings a piteous lament ; the royal deliverer, the victor of Otranto and Poggio Imperiale, tarries long ; while “ the fair land that was once full of every delight ” is ravaged with fire and sword :—

Aprete celo, e voi guardati un poco,
Pietosi Dei, a le isole del Pado,
Chè per tutto è roina e sangue e foco.
Di corpi occisi è fatto un novo vado,
E fame e peste sceman tutta via
Ogni etade ogni sexo et ogni grado.
È questa quella terra che solia
Esser spechio de Italia, anci del mondo,
A li omini cortesa et al cel pia ?
Sì regal corte e stato sì jocondo,
Tanti trionfi e tanti cavalieri
Come ha sparsi fortuna e posti al fondo ?
Le large strate or son stretti sentieri,
Arse le ville, e tra la gente morta
Stanno or le serpi, o barbari più fieri.

Non sei del tuo periglio, Italia, accorta ?
Vedi che a divorarte el Leon ponge
In ogni parte, e bate a questa porta.
La soglia de la intrata ha già tra ongie,
E ciascun passo fia soluto e piano
Se quel che io dico a tempo non vi gionge.
Ogni rimedio, ogni altro ajuto è vano,
Però che Alcide, qual era restauro
Al danno immenso et al furor insano,
Non da Getico dardo o stral di Mauro,
Ma da febre ferito a terra giace,
E sieco di vertute ogni tesauo.
O se risurga quel spirto vivace,
Credèti che il Leon, che sì se afretta,
Non farà tal fremir, come ora face.
Ma tu, perchè non vieni, anima eletta ?
Eletta in terra a possider vittoria,
Perchè non vieni a chi tanto t' aspetta ?
Ove credi aquistar mai più di gloria,

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Traendo Italia languida e confusa
Fuor de la servitù di tanta boria.¹

The third eclogue appears to be of earlier date, and has no connexion with the war; two shepherds are singing together, in somewhat Virgilian strains, in alternate song, of their loves. In the fourth, we have a lament for "the bitter capture of the son of Egeo," fallen into the hands of the horrible winged Lion—evidently Niccolò da Correggio, captured by the Venetians at Argenta, "that rare and noble spirit, the crown of virtue"—and a prophecy of his speedy deliverance and return, "like a phoenix that by

¹ "Open, Heaven, and ye, pitiful gods, look down upon the islands of the Po, for everywhere is ruin and blood and fire.

"A new ford is made of the bodies of the slain; famine and pest on all sides are destroying every age, each sex and every degree.

"Is this that city that used to be the mirror of Italy, nay, of the world, courteous to men and faithful to Heaven?

"Such royal Court, a state so jocund, so many triumphs and so many knights—how has fortune scattered them and cast them down?

"The broad ways are now narrow paths, the villas are burnt, and among the dead folk are now serpents or barbarians more fierce.

"Dost thou not perceive thy danger, Italy? See how the Lion prepares to devour thee in every part, and beats at this gate.

"The threshold of the entry it hath already in its claws, and each step will be free and easy, if He whom I say cometh not soon.

"Every remedy, every other aid is vain. For Alcides, he that was her protection against the immense calamity and its mad fury,

"Smitten not by Thracian dart or Moorish shaft, but by fever, lieth prone, and with him every treasure of virtue.

"Oh, if that keen spirit rises up, be sure that the Lion, who thus presses on, will not rage as now it doth.

"But thou, chosen soul, why comest not? Chosen on earth to possess victory, why dost not come to him who awaits thee so?

"Where dost thou think ever to win greater glory, than by delivering languid and harassed Italy from the servitude of such great pride?" (*Ecl.* ii. 70-105.)

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burning is renewed." The fifth, again, is a love poem, in which the opening lines of the *Canzoniere* are quoted as if all the rest were a thing of the past; and the sixth, which is perhaps to be connected with it, is the poem already cited as possibly relating to Boiardo's marriage. The seventh is another pastoral *tenzone*, somewhat similar to the third. In the eighth, which is one of the finest of the series, the war is raging, but only in the background; in some peaceful spot, far from its ravages, shepherds are lamenting the death of a young girl, Nysa, who, dead on earth, lives in Heaven. There is no clue here to her identity, nor to that of her lover, Menalca; probably she was one of the victims of the pestilence that accompanied the devastation of the Ferrarese territory. The ninth eclogue, on the other hand, is a coarse piece of satire on the marriage of a beautiful girl to an old and hideous husband. In the tenth and last, "the author speaks and Orpheus sings the panegyric of the incomparable Lord Duke of Calabria." It was probably the poet's greeting to Alfonso on his entry into Ferrara, anticipating his triumphs.¹

After the peace of Bagnolo, Boiardo formed one of the noble company that attended Ercole in his visit to Venice in February, 1485, the Count Niccolò Ariosti being also of the party.² The poet usually resided at this time at his

¹ Four of the eclogues referring to the war must have been written between the middle of December, 1482, and the end of January, 1483, after the papal change of policy (which is referred to in the first) and before the arrival of Alfonso. Mazzoni (*op. cit.*, pp. 333, 334, puts the tenth a little later, and finds allusions in it to the Duke's first victories over the Venetians in the spring of 1483. The other five are probably some years earlier. It is curious to note that, whereas the Latin eclogues were printed at Reggio in 1500, the ten Italian pastorals remained unedited until the nineteenth century.

² Ferrari, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

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own castle of Scandiano, where he was probably busy preparing his book for the press ; for, at the beginning of 1487, the first two books of the *Orlando Innamorato* were published in Venice, with a dedication to the Duke of Ferrara.

In January, 1487, Boiardo was appointed captain of the city and duchy of Reggio, a post which he filled for the rest of his life. On February 1, he made his state entry into his beloved *patria*, received with acclamation and enthusiasm. His residence was not the usual palace of the captain, but the great ducal citadel—the same building in which Lodovico Ariosto had been born thirteen years before. The government of Reggio was anything but a sinecure. The new captain's excessive mildness is said to have led to licence and disorder ; he had a rooted objection to inflicting the death penalty (so at least says the tradition, but we have seen an instance to the contrary), and the chronicler Panciroli declares that he was more apt for composing songs than for punishing crime. The Venetians accused him of sheltering forgers and coiners. He was much harassed by a lawsuit between himself and Taddeo Manfredi, and even more by the perpetual intrigues and interference of the ducal commissary, Messer Beltramino, a Ferrarese lawyer, who tried to undermine his authority and insisted upon regarding him as a personal enemy, although Boiardo wrote to the Duke that "from me he will have nothing but kindness and good company."¹ In another strain we find him writing to Ercole, about a treatise on architecture (evidently the famous work by Leon Battista Alberti), recently published in Florence ; he is unable to give his Excellence full particulars about the

¹ Letter of March 26, 1492. Campanini, p. 404.

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construction of fountains without it, "because I have not my imagination too well disposed, owing to the sickness that my wife has, who is very ill indeed."¹

There are a large number of letters, more than a hundred still extant, written by Boiardo while captain of Reggio. Most of them are addressed to the Duke himself; but a few are to the Gonzaga, to various Podestàs in the district of Reggio, and others. They are an extraordinary testimony to the minute scrutiny of Ercole's rule. Nothing is too small to be reported to the Duke—even if the writer himself desires leave of absence for a day, or the captain of the guard in the citadel wishes to go home to bring his household, or citizens have been masquerading against the regulations, or the friars have indulged in a petty squabble in some convent. Several letters refer to criminal processes. One of the most curious is the case of a Jew who has had intercourse with a Christian woman, Boiardo as captain substituting a fine for the usual death sentence, and apparently getting even the fine remitted. Another concerns three young noblemen of Reggio (including one of the Malaguzzi), who have carried off, not entirely without her own consent, and outraged a girl named Cassandra, the daughter of Messer Baldassare, the captain of Porta Castello.² Others deal with boundary disputes in connexion with the marchesato of Fivizzano, which was adjacent to the Duchy of Reggio, but belonged to Florence. For

¹ Letter of September 17, 1488. *Ibid.*, p. 393.

² Letters of November 16 and 24, and December 16, 1493. Campanini, pp. 409-412. This Messer Baldassare is, of course, the painter and medallist, Baldassare d'Este. A letter from him to the Duke, of November 3, 1493, crying out for justice upon those who had ruined his daughter, is given by Venturi, *L'Arte Ferrarese nel periodo d' Ercole I d' Este*, ii. pp. 381, 382.

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instance, a party of men from the Reggian town of Varano has gone to cut wood in a bosco on the frontier, which is also claimed by a townlet just outside the duchy called Gruppo San Pietro, and has been assailed by the folk of the latter place, shouting, "Havoc! Havoc! Marzocco! Marzocco!" Or the cattle from Varano, feeding over the boundary, have been lifted by the people of Ameglia; and in each case the poet-captain has to interfere, to prevent reprisals and political complications. Other letters deal with hawks and hounds and horses, and one is about some antique medals that have been found by a contadino, several of which are still at the command of the Duke.

But, even with all these multitudinous cares weighing upon him, Matteo Maria found time for literature. It was probably in these years at Reggio that he translated the *Vitae Excellentium Imperatorum* of Cornelius Nepos, and wrote the *Timone* for the Duke's theatre at Ferrara. The latter work, which upon a mere hypothesis is usually assigned to the year 1491, is written in *terza rima*, founded upon a Latin translation (perhaps Aurispa's) of Lucian's dialogue, and is more in the form of a miracle-play than a true drama. It has small poetic and no dramatic value; but it is naturally pleasant for English readers to see Ariosto's forerunner also heralding Shakespeare. Boiardo's supreme literary achievement of these years is the continuation, the nine cantos of the third part, of his *Orlando*, doomed to be cut short together with his life and Italy's liberty.

Probably there was no one more interested in the progress of this poem than Isabella d' Este, to whom Boiardo intended to dedicate it when completed. She wrote twice to him in the August of 1491, begging him to send her that part of the work, the *Inamoramento de Orlando*, as they

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called it, which he had newly composed, promising to send it back at once, as soon as she had read it. The poet answered that he had composed no more than what she had already seen, when she was at Reggio with her mother. "If your Excellence would like to see that, pray inform me, for I will have it transcribed at once and send it to you; and I am sorry, to content you, that I have not continued the work, which has been interrupted by other occupations." Of course Isabella wanted that part, as she could get nothing more, and begged him to send it to her in order that she might read it another time. "Most illustrious and worshipful Lady mine," answered Boiardo, "at present I have no copy save the original in my own hand, which would be difficult to read; but I will have a copy made of it, and send it to your Ladyship within six days by a special mounted messenger."¹ Every modern author will realize the poet's predicament.

At the end of 1493, Boiardo wrote a somewhat pitifully worded supplication to the Duke, begging him to confirm him in his offices at Reggio in the usual way. But, as a rule, his service and adulation (which was evidently quite sincere) by no means implied blind subservience. On one occasion, the Marquis of Mantua told Boiardo's brother-in-law, Count Cristoforo Gonzaga, that he had heard from the Duke of Ferrara that Boiardo had accused him (the Count Cristoforo), by letter, of secret negotiations with the Government of Milan. "If any one has told your Celsitude this," wrote Boiardo to the Marquis, "on behalf of the Lord Duke of Ferrara, he has departed from the truth. If

¹ Letters of August 8 and 17, 1491. Campanini, p. 404. See also Luzio, *Isabella d' Este e l' Orlando Innamorato*, in the *Studi su M. M. Boiardo*, pp. 149-154, where the text of Isabella's two letters is given.

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his Excellence himself has said it, I keep silent and say no more.”¹ A few years later, he makes a dignified answer to an accusation of the Duke himself that he has received and sheltered proclaimed criminals (*banniti*) at Scandiano and places governed by him. “Your Lordship should hold for certain that, while I am in this place, I would not keep men under ban in my house; if I did not act thus for reverence of your Lordship, I should do so for my own honour.”²

Throughout the fatal year of 1494, we have an almost continuous series of letters from Boiardo to Ercole, in his capacity of governor of Reggio, full of the bustle and turmoil of the time. Here and there, especially in his private and confidential correspondence with the Duke, the poet-captain reveals a delightfully satirical humour. A Franciscan conventual, Frate Giovanni da Monleone, who appears on the banks of the Secchia, attended like a grand prelate rather than a religious, and professes to have been summoned by the Pope to compose the differences between the Kings of France and Spain, is a life-like portrait of the ecclesiastical political wire-puller of the epoch.³ When “Don Juliano,” captain of the French *balestrieri*, comes to Reggio with his company, Boiardo, attended by Messer Beltramino and Sigismondo Canterno, goes to drink with him in his hostelry. He describes in full the man’s swagger and pretentiousness, his silk doublet all stained with soup, his black velvet cloak blazing with jewels which “Messere” thought magnificent, but which his superior perceived to be all false, his fine show of plate and silver which was of the same value as the jewels. “His conversation is exactly like his equipment,”

¹ Letter of May 7, 1489. Campanini, p. 397.

² Letter of May 30, 1494. *Ibid.*, p. 427.

³ Letter of May 14, 1494. *Ibid.*, p. 424.

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he writes ; " your Excellence can hear all about it from Messere. I do not think that I shall light upon another Don Juliano." ¹

But the humour soon dies away. Boiardo paints with slight but firm touches the incidents in the passage of the royal and ducal troops, the difficulty of finding quarters and supplies for them, the havoc wrought in all directions, the misery of the people, the brutalities and prepotency of the French, the inability of the milder Italian officers to get their commands obeyed. Antisemitic troubles were added. The French maltreated and plundered the Jews, and on one occasion would have butchered one in the street, if certain priests had not come to the rescue ; a friar (the religious of the duchy apparently differing from the secular clergy and the Duke on the Semitic question) thundered against the Hebrews from the pulpit, until Boiardo, in Ercole's name, cautioned him to moderate his eloquence.²

Utterly worn out by his labours, Boiardo was now rapidly breaking down in health, and the last two months of his life were occupied in a feverish attempt, as it were from his death-bed, to secure the town and marchesato of Fivizzano for Duke Ercole, in the general dissolution of the Florentine territory that seemed imminent. From Milan, on November 7, Ercole wrote cautiously both to Boiardo and to the Ancients of Reggio, giving a sort of consent to the scheme ; and the inhabitants of Fivizzano itself, who had been horribly maltreated by the French in their passage, seemed to see in the sway of the House of Este their one

¹ Letter of August 26, 1494. *Ibid.*, pp. 444, 445. But when this showy warrior got to Modena, he made a great impression upon the people. Cf. Jacopino de' Bianchi, p. 120.

² Letters of October 10 and 13. Campanini, pp. 452, 453.

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hope of adequate protection. Boiardo and the Ancients at once opened a correspondence with the Podestàs and people of the district. But they were anticipated by the Malaspina, who entered Fivizzano while the negotiations were in progress; and, in the meantime, the Florentines heard of what was on foot, and formally complained to the Ferrarese ambassador, Manfredo Manfredi. Ercole had returned to Ferrara, and, on December 13, the Ancients of Reggio received a strongly-worded dispatch from him, censuring them in the most severe terms, and affecting ignorance of the whole negotiation. "If you have really written such letters," he said, "you have done very wrongly, and we are greatly displeased. We wish you instantly to recall those letters, and to write to the contrary, as shall seem best to you, to make your excuses."¹

Thus, with his last effort to serve his master disowned and rejected, his mind full of apprehensions for his native land, Boiardo died on December 19, "at about the second hour of the night."

Unfinished though it be, the *Orlando Innamorato* is a landmark in the history of Italian literature. It is, strictly speaking, not an epic of any kind, but a romance written in poetry. We have seen already the fascination which the legends of Charlemagne's paladins and Arthur's knights exercised over the minds of the cavaliers and ladies of the Ferrarese Court, the zeal displayed by the princes in collecting these romances and adventures, whether in the original French or in Italian translations, for their libraries. A few months before her appeal to Boiardo for the loan of

¹ For the whole episode see Campanini, *M. M. Boiardo al Governo di Reggio*, in the *Studi su M. M. Boiardo*, pp. 106-110, and Boiardo's letters during October and November, pp. 455-460.

the manuscript of the additions to his poem, the Marchesana Isabella had entered into a prolonged and animated discussion, both by word of mouth and by letter, with Galeazzo Visconti, as to the rival merits of Orlando and Rinaldo, —she herself persisting in her preference for the latter hero, while Galeazzo to the last professed himself ready to defend the honour of Orlando, and to prove to her Ladyship “that there has never been a man equal to him in all virtue and valour.”¹ The Estensi hailed Ruggiero as their ancestor, the perfect knight and paladin of Trojan race; but their Venetian enemies professed to attribute to them a far less honourable descent, from Gano or Ganelon, and the House of Maganza (Mayence), the typical traitors of the Carolingian cycle.² This admiration for and interest in great Charles and his chivalry was not confined to the noble and cultured; the people loved to hear the songs that told of the doughty deeds of the paladins, just as Manzoni’s immortal tailor found his intellectual food in the perusal of the *Reali di Francia*. On a historical occasion, to be described later, the street rabble of Venice assailed Duke Ercole with cat-calls and yells of “Maganzese.” For the Arthurian romances, however, those *Arturi regis ambages pulcherrimae*, as Dante called them, the taste was entirely confined to the aristocracy of the epoch.

Already in Tuscany, for the delectation of Lorenzo de’ Medici and his circle, Luigi Pulci had fused some of the

¹ See Luzio and Renier, *Delle Relazioni di Isabella d’ Este Gonzaga con Lodovico e Beatrice Sforza*, pp. 100–107. Cf. Boiardo, *Orl. Inn.*, II. xxvi. 1 (quoted below). The letter from Borso da Correggio, given by Luzio and Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 379, and translated by Mrs. Ady, *op. cit.*, p. 206, shows that the latter is mistaken in identifying this Galeazzo Visconti with Galeazzo da San Severino.

² See Rajna, *Le Fonti dell’ Orlando Furioso*, pp. 134–137; and cf. below, p. 319.

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matter of the Carolingian cycle, *la materia di Francia*, into a work of art. Boiardo went further than this. He put fresh life into the stories, and transformed them by a new spirit drawn from the Arthurian cycle, *la materia di Bretagna*. Taking his heroes from the familiar and popular figures of the personages of the cycle of Charlemagne, investing them with the characteristics and attributes and adventures of the knights and ladies of the cycle of Arthur, adding a strong infusion of classical mythology seen as with the eyes and rendered somewhat in the manner of such painters as Botticelli and Piero di Cosimo, Boiardo composed his poetic romance.¹ The Carolingian and Arthurian legends, and the new classicism of the early Renaissance, are fused into a harmonious whole. The fierce paladins of the Emperor are transformed into knights errant, and Love is made the lord of all, Christian and Paynim alike :—

Non vi par già, signor, maraviglioso
Odir contar d' Orlando innamorato ;
Chè qualunque nel mondo è più orgoglioso,
E da amor vinto al tutto e soggiogato ;
Nè forte braccio, nè ardire animoso,
Nè scudo o maglia, nè brando affilato,
Nè altra possanza può mai far difesa,
Che al fin non sia da amor battuta e presa.²

Thus the terrible Orlando himself, the martyr of Roncesvalles, the thunder of whose horn rolls through

¹ Cf. Rajna, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-25, and his study of the *Innamorato* in the *Studi su M. M. Boiardo*, pp. 129-134 ; Gaspari, ii., part i., pp. 263-274.

² "Think it not marvellous, lordings, to hear tell of Orlando enamoured ; for whoso in the world is haughtiest is utterly conquered and subdued by Love. Nor mighty arm, nor daring courage, nor shield or mail, nor sharp sword, nor any other power can ever defend him from being at the end beaten and taken by Love." (*Orl. Inn.*, I. i. 2).



The Triumph of Venus.

(detail)

By Francesco del Cossa.

Engraved by J. G. Smith.

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the literature of the Middle Ages to find an echo still in Dante's *Inferno*, becomes a Tristram or a Lancelot for the nonce; nay more, is the willing amorous slave of the lovely Saracen Angelica. The innate common-sense of the Italian genius keeps the poet from taking the more extravagant exploits and adventures too seriously, or recording them otherwise than to raise a laugh by appealing to the authority of Turpin; while his native cynicism, or perhaps that lack of genuine appreciation of mysticism which seems ingrained in the Italian character, draws him back from the dizzy ascents of the Quest of the Holy Graal. No hero of Boiardo's would have dreamed of setting foot "in the city of Sarras, in the spiritual place." The sanctity of a Galahad or a Perceval, the repentance of a Lancelot, would have introduced an utterly discordant note; and, for the same reason, we should seek in vain through his stanzas for the pity and terror of the fall of Guenevere. They are as lovers and seekers of adventure alone that the warriors of the Table Round appeal to the Count of Scandiano and his courtly audience:—

Fu gloriosa Bertagna la grande
Una stagion per l' arme e per l' amore,
Onde ancor oggi il nome suo si spande
Sì che al re Artuse fa portare onore,
Quando i buon cavalieri a quelle bande
Mostrarno in più battaglie il suo valore,
Andando con lor dame in avventura,
Ed or sua fama al nostro tempo dura.

Re Carlo in Franza poi tenne gran corte,
Ma a quella prima non fu somigliante,
Benche assai fosse ancor robusto e forte
Ed avesse Ranaldo e 'l Sir d' Anglante;
Perchè tenne ad Amor chiuse le porte,
E sol si dette a le battaglie sante,
Non fu di quel valore o quella stima
Qual fu quell' altra che io contava in prima,

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Però che A more è quel che dà la gloria,
E che fa l'uomo degno ed onorato :
Amore è quel che dona la vittoria,
E dona ardir al cavaliere armato.¹

And again, in a passage which has caught more of the true Arthurian ring :—

Il vago amor che a sue dame soprane
Portarno al tempo antico i cavalieri,
E le battaglie e le venture istrane,
E l'armeggiar per giostre e per tornieri,
Fa, che il suo nome al mondo anche rimane,
E ciaschedun lo ascolti volentieri ;
E chi più l'uno e chi più l'altro onora,
Come vivi tra noi fussero ancora.

E qual fia quel, che odendo di Tristano
E di sua dama ciò che se ne dice,
Che non mova ad amarli il core umano,
Riputando il suo fin dolce e felice ?
Che viso a viso essendo e mano a mano
E il cor co 'l cor più stretto a la radice,
Ne le braccia l' un l' altro, a tal conforto,
Ciascun di lor rimase a un punto morto.

E Lancilotto e sua regina bella
Mostrarno l' un per l' altro un tal valore,
Che dove de' suoi gesti si favella,
Par che d' intorno il cielo arda d' amore.

¹ " Britain the great was glorious once with arms and love, whence still its name resounds so that it brings honour to King Arthur, when the good knights in those regions showed its worth in many battles, going on adventures with their ladies ; and now its fame lasts to our time.

" King Charles afterwards held great Court in France, but it was not like that former one, albeit it, too, was right strenuous and strong, and had Rinaldo and the Lord of Anglante ; because it kept the gates closed to Love, and only engaged in holy battles, it was not of such worth or such renown as was that other of which I first told.

" For Love it is that gives glory, and that makes man worthy and honoured : it is Love that gives the victory, and gives daring to the knight in arms " (*Orl. Inn.*, II. xviii. 1-3).

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Traggasi avanti adunque ogni donzella,
Ogni baron, che vuol portare onore,
Et oda nel mio canto quel che io dico
Di dame e cavalier del tempo antico.¹

The poem opens with the great banquet given by Charlemagne at Paris to the flower of Christian and Saracen chivalry. The enchanting sorceress Angelica appears, attended by four giants and her brother Argalia; she enamours to distraction all present with her beauty, especially the paladins Orlando and Rinaldo, and the Saracen Ferraguto; her person is to be the prize of the man who shall unhorse her brother at the Rock of Merlin, the unsuccessful to remain his prisoners—the whole being a deep-laid plot of her pagan father to destroy the power of Charlemagne. For Argalia has an enchanted lance of gold, against which no knightly prowess can avail, and Angelica has a similar ring which, worn on the finger, renders all enchantment useless against the wearer, and carried in the mouth confers invisibility.

From this beginning, through varied and complicated

¹ “The fair love that knights bore to their sovereign ladies in the olden time, and the battles and strange adventures, and the combating in jousts and tourneys, make its name still last in the world, and each one gladly hears of it; and one honours more one and another more another, as though they were yet living among us.

“And is there a man that, hearing of Tristram and of his lady the tale that is told, is not moved in his heart to love them, deeming their end sweet and happy? For, face to face and hand to hand, heart joined to heart in close embrace, in each other’s arms thus comforted they died together at one moment.

“Lancelot too and his lovely queen showed each for each such worth, that, where we speak of their deeds, it seems that the sky around burns with love. Let every damsel then come forward, every baron that would gain honour, and hear in my song what I say of ladies and knights of the olden time” (*Orl. Inn.*, II. xxvi. 1-3).

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entanglement and enchantment, the main thread is the war raised upon Charlemagne by King Gradasso of Sericana for the sword of Orlando and the horse of Rinaldo, and (when this is brought to a satisfactory end by the wonders wrought by Argalia's lance of gold in the hands of Astolfo of England) the subsequent invasion of France by King Agramante of Africa and the Saracen Marsilio of Spain ; while a third independent struggle rages round the fortress of Albracca, in which Angelica has taken refuge, and where she is besieged first by Agricane, King of Tartary, and then by the maiden warrior Marfisa, in whom, though it is not expressly so stated by Boiardo, we are to learn later from Ariosto to recognize the sister of Ruggiero.

This "third paladin," Ruggiero, Agramante's cousin, is descended from Hector and Alexander, and is the fabled ancestor of the House of Este. He does not appear until the second part of the poem, when he is still a pagan and about to accompany the Saracens in their invasion of France. The opening of the third part shows that Boiardo intended to bring the history of Ruggiero down to his treacherous murder by Gano of Maganza and his crew. As it is, he only gets as far as the hero's first meeting with his future bride, Brandiamante or Bradamante, the warrior-sister of Rinaldo, who is, of course, fighting upon the opposite side. Ruggiero has interrupted the single combat between her and Rodomonte with the news of the defeat of the army of Charlemagne, and, as they bear each other company on their way, the youth, who supposes his brave companion to be some Frankish knight, tells her the history of his family and his upbringing by the magician Atlante. The girl grows madly enamoured of him as he speaks, and longs to make him show her his face. In answer to his

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request, she tells him who she is, and suddenly lifts her helmet :—

Nel trar de l' elmo, si sciolse la trezza,
Ch' era di color d' oro a lo splendore :
Avea il suo viso una delicatezza
Mescolata di ardire e di vigore ;
I labbri, 'l naso, i cigli e ogni fattezza
Parean dipinti per le man d' Amore,
Gli occhi avevano un dolce tanto vivo,
Che dir non puossi, ed io non lo descrivo.

Ne l' apparir de l'angelico aspetto,
Ruggier rimase e vinto e sbigottito,
E sentissi tremare il core in petto,
Parendo lui di foco esser ferito :
Non sa più che si fare il giovinetto,
Non era a pena di parlare ardito,
Con l'elmo in testa non l' avea temuta,
Smarrito è mo che in faccia l' ha veduta. '

Essa poi cominciò : Deh ! bel signore,
Piacciavi compiacermi solo in questo,
Se a dama alcuna mai portaste amore,
Ch' io veda il vostro viso manifesto.
Così parlando odirno un gran rumore ;
Disse Ruggiero : Oh Dio ! che sarà questo ?
Presto si volta e vede gente armata,
Che vien correndo a lor per quella strata.¹

¹ " In the drawing off her helmet her hair was loosed, which was of the colour and splendour of gold ; her face had a delicacy mingled with daring and vigour ; her lips, her nose, her eyebrows, and every feature seemed painted by the hands of Love. Her eyes had such living sweetness that it could not be said, and I describe it not.

" At the appearing of her angelical aspect, Ruggiero was conquered and dismayed, and he felt his heart trembling in his breast, it seeming to him that he had been wounded with fire. The youth knows no more what to do ; he hardly dared to speak. With her helmet on her head, he had not feared her ; fordone is he now that he has seen her in the face.

" Then she began : ' Ah ! fair lord, be pleased to gratify me only in this ; if you ever bore love to any lady, let me see your face

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They have fallen into an ambush ; in the desperate fight that follows the two are separated, and Bradamante will never see Ruggiero's face unhelmeted, until Ariosto sets his hand to finishing the poem.

It is possible, as has been suggested, that the main theme of the poem, the struggle of Charlemagne with his pagan assailants, may have had some actuality for the poet's contemporaries, who saw their civilization actually threatened by the Mussulman. But it is the part of the work for which the modern reader cares least.

Strane avventure e battaglie amorose,
Quando virtute al buon tempo fioriva,
Tra cavalieri e dame graziose,¹

—these are what charm us in the *Orlando Innamorato* to-day. Boiardo finds most of his characters ready to his hand in the old romances ; but he invents for them new adventures, heaps up marvellous and monstrous enchantments and sorceries, some of which are detailed with an air of reality that is, for the moment, almost convincing. And he is an excellent story-teller, introducing poetical *novelle*, which, however, it must be added, have considerably more of Boccaccio's licence and cynicism than of his power of characterization. He is a genuine painter in words, showing us gardens and palaces like those we find in the frescoes of Cosimo Tura and Francesco del Cossa, painting figures drawn from classical mythology

openly.' As she spoke, they heard a great noise. Said Ruggiero : ' Oh God, what shall this be ? ' Straightway he turns and sees armed men, who come rushing upon them by that road." (*Orl. Inn.*, III. v. 41-43.)

¹ " Strange adventures and amorous battles, when virtue flourished in the good time, among knights and gracious ladies." (*Orl. Inn.*, III. i. 4.)

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with the brush of a Botticelli or Piero di Cosimo. There is absolutely no serious intention, no shadow of philosophy of any kind, to be found throughout ; his one aim is to keep his hearers interested and amused, to while away the time when it hangs heavy upon the hands of the princes and nobles for whom he writes. His attitude towards women and sexual morality in general is frankly cynical. His virtue of virtues is fidelity to one's sovereign lord—though he lets even his Orlando desert Charlemagne for the love of Angelica. Friendship between man and man appeals most deeply to his inmost nature :—

Più che il tesoro e più che forza vale,
Più che il diletto assai, più che l' onore,
Il buon amico e compagnia leale ;
E a due, che insieme sì portino amore,
Maggior li pare il ben, minor il male,
Potendo appalesar l' un l' altro il core,
E ogni dubbio che accada, o raro o spesso,
Poterlo ad altrui dir come a sè stesso.

Che giova aver di perle e d' ôr divizia,
Aver alta possanza e grande stato,
Quando si gode sol, senza amicizia ?
Colui ch' altri non ama e non è amato,
Non puote aver compita una letizia.¹

The most prominent defect of the poem is its almost complete lack of effective characterization. Although Boiardo is justly entitled to the merit of having first dis-

¹ " A good friend and loyal fellowship is worth more than treasure and more than power, much more than pleasure, more than honour. To two that love each other, weal seems greater and woe seems less, since each can open his heart, and tell every doubt that rises, be it seldom or often, to another as to himself.

" What boots it to have wealth of pearls and gold, to have lofty power and great state, when they are enjoyed alone without friendship ? He who loves not another, and is not loved, cannot have one joy complete." (*Orl. Inn.*, III. vii. 1-2.)

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covered in the firmament of love "the star that made men mad, Angelica's," he is incapable of creating a convincing and self-consistent character. No doubt, deep psychological analysis in the case of an Orlando or an Angelica would be out of place in a poem of this kind (though we shall find something of it in Ariosto), but Boiardo hardly seems to conceive of them save as puppets to be moved in his wonderful game. He invests them with all kinds of contradictory qualities from canto to canto, to suit the need of the marvellous adventures that he has found for them.¹ And this is the same, but to a lesser extent, with the other characters; Rinaldo, Marfisa (an invention, hardly a creation, of the poet's own), Rodomonte, Agramante, and the rest, are less contradictory, because less fully drawn; they hardly appeal to us as human beings. Brandimarte, the faithful lover of Fiordelisa and the devoted friend of Orlando, is the most conceivable and sympathetic figure among the minor personages, and one whom Boiardo himself evidently follows with affection.

There is, however, one noticeable exception to this general lack of characterization: the ever-delightful young English paladin, Astolfo, though he is only a sketch. Handsome and dainty, a mere carpet-knight in appearance, with no special strength or skill in arms, but with never-failing good humour and dauntless courage, he confronts danger after danger, courting fall after fall. The enchanted lance of Argalia falls into appropriate hands! Astolfo has no idea of its powers when, at the tournament, all the knights

¹ G. A. Cesareo, indeed, in his spirited article entitled *La Fantasia dell' Ariosto* (in the *Nuova Antologia*, November 16, 1900), goes so far as to assert that Boiardo's Orlando in each canto is another man.

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of Christendom are falling before the gigantic paynim Grandonio, and he goes out to encounter him without the slightest prospect of success :—

Nè già si crede quel franco barone
Aver vittoria contra del pagano ;
Ma sol con pura e buona intenzione
Di far il suo dover per Carlo Mano.
Stava molto atto sopra de l' arcione,
E simigliava a cavalier soprano ;
Ma color tutti che l' han conosciuto,
Diceano : O Dio ! deh mandaci altro aiuto ! ¹

He can hardly believe his own eyes when he sees the giant fall. But, after that, though exceedingly marvellous to every one else, it seems quite natural to him that he should overthrow everybody that ventures to break a lance with him, and his natural disposition to brag finds its justification. He harbours no resentment against the Emperor for his imprisonment, and but little against Gano for his treachery and description of him as the *buffone* of the Court ; but, while Charlemagne and the rest are wild with indignation and apprehension at the way this *pazzo* has intervened and staked their liberties upon his own prowess, he unhorses the victorious Gradasso, and, after a not too prolonged jape at their expense, frees them all. And in this spirit he goes through the whole romance.

Endowed with a marvellous faculty of invention, Boiardo had neither the imagination nor the creative power of Ariosto. Morally, no less than artistically, the *Orlando Innamorato* is on a much lower plane than the *Furioso*.

¹ " Nor indeed does that brave baron think to have the victory against the pagan, but solely with pure and good intention to do his duty for Charlemagne. Right firmly sate he in his saddle, and seemed like a sovereign knight ; but all those who recognized him said : ' Oh God, pray send us other aid ! ' " (*Orl. Inn.*, I. ii. 66.)

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Yet there is one respect in which the Count of Scandiano contrasts favourably with Messer Lodovico and with Torquato Tasso, as also, it must be confessed, with "our sage and serious poet Spenser." There is far less adulation in the *Innamorato* than in their poems, and it is practically confined to three places. When young Ruggiero is about to cross from Africa to France with the pagan chivalry of King Agramante, the necromancer Atlante foretells the future glory of the House that the youth will found among the Christians, and the mighty deeds of certain of the Estensi.¹ This is, undoubtedly, in its place, and fits in with the general purpose of the fable. The other two passages of the kind are dragged in, as we English say, without rhyme or reason. In the magical palace of the Fata Febosilla, the valiant Brandimarte, in the intervals of his struggles with the evil enchantments of the place, sees a loggia of which the four sides are decorated with paintings representing the exploits of four of the illustrious House, one side devoted to each: Aldobrandino conquering the imperial armies, "at the Adda in the Brescian fields"; Azzo Novello and the famous defeat of Ezzelino da Romano; Niccolò III in his youth triumphing over his foes, his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, his reception by the King of France; the early career of Ercole himself.² King Dolistone presents his son-in-law with a pavilion, upon which the Sibyl of Cumae has worked "great deeds and noble wondrous histories, and days present and future and past." Here are the figures of twelve Alfonsos: nine of Aragon and

¹ *Orl. Inn.*, II. xxi. 55-59.

² *Ibid.*, II. xxv. 42-56. Boiardo, doubtless, saw these things in the style of the frescoes of the Schifanoia. His ignoring Borso among the glories of the House of Este is somewhat noticeable; after the old Duke's death we find no mention of him in Boiardo's work.

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Castile, ancestors of the Duchess Leonora; Alfonso the Magnanimous and Alfonso of Calabria, her great-grandfather and father; the young hereditary Prince of Ferrara. The praises of King and Duke are sung in no measured terms, but there is—if I mistake not—a ring of genuine feeling in the picture of the boy, Alfonso d' Este :—

Avanti a lui si stava inginocchiata
Buona Ventura, lieta ne' sembianti,
E pareva dire : Dolce figliol, guata
A le prodezze de gli avoli tanti,
A la tua stirpe al mondo nominata ;
Onde, fra tutti, fa che tu ti vanti
Di cortesia, di senno e di valore,
Sì che tu facci al tuo bel nome onóre.¹

These, however, are surely little, when compared with the extravagant flattery addressed later on by Ariosto to the Cardinal Ippolito, or with Spenser's hardly less fulsome laudations of Queen Elizabeth.

The struggle with Venice had interrupted, the French invasion now finally cut short, the *Orlando Innamorato*. A few months, or perhaps weeks, before his death, the pen had dropped from Boiardo's hand ; the noble poet was too full of apprehension for his native land, too sick at heart to carry out his story :—

Mentre che io canto, O Dio Redentore,
Vedo l' Italia tutta a fiamma e foco,
Per questi Galli, che con gran valore
Vengon, per disertar non so che loco.

¹ " Before him was kneeling Good Fortune, joyous in her semblance. ' Sweet son,' she seemed to say, ' look at the mighty deeds of such great ancestors, and at thy race renowned in the world. Wherefore, among all, make thyself glorious for courtesy, for wisdom and for valour ; so that thou mayst do honour to thy fair name.' " (*Orl. Inn.*, II. xxvii. 59.)

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Però vi lascio in questo vano amore
Di Fiordespina ardente a poco a poco :
Un' altra fiata, se mi fia concesso,
Raconterovvi il tutto per espresso.¹

Harshly, indeed, did fate deal with Boiardo, alike in his descendants and in his poetry. His talented young son, Camillo, died in 1499. Count Giovanni Boiardo hunted out the poet's widow Taddea and her daughters from Scandiano, and deprived them of all they had, so that "she and the daughters lack even the food necessary for them to live."² Some thirty years later, Francesco Berni took the *Orlando Innamorato* in hand, and for centuries his *rifacimento* was read in the place of its nobler original. Berni diluted, altered, and utterly spoiled the last stanza ; its pathos was lost on the men of a new era, to whom foreign preponderance and the presence of great "barbarian" armies upon Italian soil had come to seem merely the natural order of things.

¹ " Whilst I sing, O God Redeemer, I see all Italy in flames and fire, through these Gauls who, with great valour, come to lay waste what place I know not. Wherefore I leave you in this vain love of Fiordespina gradually burning. Another time, if it be conceded to me, I will tell you the whole in full." (*Orl. Inn.*, final stanza.)

² See the letter of April 13, 1504, from Isabella d' Este to Duke Ercole on Taddea's behalf, in Bertoni, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

Chapter IX

THE DUKE AND THE FRIAR

“THIS friar of ours, Girolamo Savonarola,” wrote the Ferrarese ambassador in Florence, Manfredo Manfredi, to Duke Ercole on December 10, 1494, “has so much influence and such great following in this city, that it is a most stupendous thing.” And, a few days later, he wrote again, describing the great work that Savonarola was doing: “He aims at nothing save the good of all, seeking for union and peace, being convinced—as is the truth—that the city cannot otherwise live in tranquillity and repose.”¹

From Ferrara itself the victorious progress of the King of France through Italy had been watched with considerable popular sympathy. Ercole, perplexed and hesitating in his policy, was having artillery of all kinds cast with the utmost celerity, to be prepared for whatever emergency the morrow might bring forth. He probably dreaded an attack from Venice, and certainly knew that he was condemned by the public opinion of almost all Italy. The Pope professed himself amazed at the cowardice of the Italians. “May God pardon the Lord Lodovico and the Duke of Ferrara,”

¹ Dispatches of December 10, 15, and 20. Cappelli, *Fra Girolamo Savonarola*, p. 337.

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he said to Pandolfo Collenuccio, who had sought an interview with him in Ercole's name, "who have been the cause of this." And when Pandolfo tried to make excuses, the Pope showed himself convinced that Ercole's counsel and authority could have prevented Lodovico from summoning the French. Pandolfo declared that his master had done his best, but Alexander shrugged his shoulders: "I know not; all the same he is greatly blamed for it."¹

Ercole kept in constant touch with the French in their advance, through his son Ferrando, to whom he continually sent money by means of letters of exchange payable in Rome, where the King stopped from December 31 until January 28. But when Charles left Rome on his march towards Naples, Don Ferrando remained behind, apparently on the plea that he had not enough money to enable him to follow the Court with sufficient dignity, as the King had not paid him his allowance. Ercole was furious, and sent one of his secretaries, Giovanni Antonio Mariano, to Rome, provided with a letter of credit for five hundred ducats, and armed with his paternal authority to take the young prince to Naples and present him to the King.

"All these things," he wrote, "have proceeded and proceed from your own negligence, and from your wishing to give yourself to idleness and to avoid labour; because if you had followed the Most Christian King, as was your duty and our intention, you would have got your allowance sooner; the Majesty of the King would have seen you, and you would have given him occasion to remember you. And when Messer Sigismondo Cantelmo arrived there with the letter of exchange for five hundred ducats, you could quite

¹ See the long dispatch of November 6, 1494, from Pandolfo to Ercole. Balan, v. pp. 414-415.

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well follow the Most Christian King and not stay there doing nothing ; and if you could not go on with all your company, you ought to have gone with four or five horsemen rather than leave him, and to have sent hither those for whom you could not provide. But you wanted to stay at Rome and take a holiday, where you have spent more than you would have done in following the King. If, by your laziness and negligence, you lose the support of the Most Christian King, you will repent of it with time, and you will wish you had not lost it. Keep well in mind what we tell you ! If by your own fault you lose this opening, do not hope for anything from us, save a bad welcome and harsh treatment.”¹

On hearing the news of the flight of the young King Ferdinand—in whose favour Alfonso had abdicated—and the triumphant entry of Charles into Naples (February 22, 1495), the Diarist is immensely edified, declaring that the King has conquered thus easily “as a messenger sent from God,” and that it is a just punishment for the abominable cruelties practised by the late King Ferrante and by Alfonso, the former of whom he further states was responsible for the Venetian war against Ercole and the loss of the Polesine of Rovigo, which he had caused the Venetians to retain. The turn of the Venetians will follow. “But I hope in God that, in a few days’ time, they will wish that they had restored it freely to our Lord the Duke, and that they will give it back to him more than gladly ; for now the time seems come when God will punish them, and the King of France will take from them what they have on the mainland and in Cyprus, and almost up to Venice, for their

¹ *Minute Ducali* to Don Ferrando, February 27, 1495. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*.

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inestimable pride and haughtiness, and for their other innumerable vices and sins. Since this Holy Man entered Italy, there has always been the most beautiful and best weather, and there have been no snows nor winds nor cold, with hardly any rain. Praise be to God!"¹ Hardly had the Diarist written this, when the weather broke up, and throughout the following month terrible storms of rain, wind and snow swept over Italy—phenomena for which he offers no explanation.

Hearing of the King's uninterrupted triumphs, Ercole expressed his "singular pleasure and satisfaction," and sent Ferrando a letter of congratulation to present to his Majesty, as soon as he should find himself again in his presence: "Let him understand that by no one are we surpassed in this joy and gladness." Ferrando himself sent his father a very contrite epistle about his lingering in Rome, which the Duke received kindly, though he repeated: "If you behave as you have behaved in the past, do not hope to be loved by us." However, he soon heard from Ferrando and the secretary that they had arrived in Naples, and that the former had been very kindly received by the King and Court, and expressed his approval. "Having understood from the letters of our secretary," he writes to Ferrando, "that you have begun to behave yourself well and with diligence, and to do what pertains to your office, we have been greatly pleased and contented; we praise and commend you for it, and we tell you that you must continue in being diligent and assiduous in the services of that King, and be prompt and ready at the Court, because by so doing you will do a benefit to yourself and a great pleasure to us,

¹ *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 295.

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as we shall be displeased if you act otherwise.”¹ He bids Mariano congratulate the King on the conquest in his name, as he doubts not that Don Ferrando has already done, and is sending Bonifazio Bevilacqua and Giulio Tassoni as special envoys for the same purpose.² For fear of compromising himself too deeply, he recalled these latter at once, as soon as they had performed their mission.

The easy triumph of the ultramontane invader had thoroughly alarmed all the other Italian Powers, although Lodovico Sforza assured the Venetians that he “would find means to send the King home with empty hands.” Ferdinand of Spain and the King of the Romans, the only foreign sovereigns who had a stake in the peninsula, began to fear, the one for Sicily and Sardinia, the other for the imperial crown. The conduct of the French had further exasperated the temper of the people. There was a general assembling of ambassadors and envoys at Venice; while Comines—who had been sent thither by Charles from Asti in the previous autumn—strove his uttermost to prevent the League from being concluded, warned the King of what was on foot, urged the Duke of Orleans (who had turned back after the capture of Rapallo in September) to be on his guard at Asti, and the Regent, the Duke of Bourbon, to send reinforcements, “because that place being lost, no aid could come to the King.” Late at night, on the last day of March, the League was concluded. “The

¹ Letters of March 1, 17, and 29, 1495. In a letter of April 9, he gives him permission to tilt in a *giostra*, which is “an honourable thing and not too dangerous,” but strictly forbids him to take part in any way in another which is to be held at Easter with battle-weapons, “because it is dangerous and little honourable.” Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*.

² March 18, 1495. Archivio di Modena, *Minutario Cronologico*.

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next morning," writes Comines, "the Signory sent for me earlier than they were accustomed. And when I was come and set down, the Doge told me that, in honour of the Holy Trinity, there was a League concluded between our Holy Father the Pope, the Kings of the Romans and Castile, them, and the Duke of Milan, for three purposes: the first, for the defence of the estate of Christendom against the Turk; the second, for the defence of Italy; and the third, for the preservation of their own estates, whereof he willed me to advertise the King. They were assembled to the number of a hundred or more, and looked up with cheerful countenances, and sate not as they did the day they advertised me of the taking of the castle of Naples. The Doge told me, moreover, that they had written to their ambassadors that were with the King, to take their leave and to return home; their names were Master Dominic Loredan and Master Dominic Trevisan. I was marvellously troubled with this news, for I stood in doubt both of the King's person and of all his company, supposing their army to have been readier than indeed it was, as did themselves also. I feared further lest the Almains had been at hand; and not without cause; for if they had, undoubtedly the King had never departed out of Italy."¹

The ambassador of Naples—for the dethroned Ferdinand was still represented in Venice—put off his mourning, "and showed a cheerful countenance, as he had great cause to do, for these were good news for him." From his window, Comines watched the procession of the gondolas of the ambassadors along the canal, "with goodly melody," and one of the Milanese, who had hitherto been on most friendly

¹ *Mémoires*, vii. 15. Throughout this chapter I quote Danett's translation of 1596, with slight modifications.

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terms with him, "made a countenance now as though he knew me no more." On April 2, the Visdomino of the Venetians in Ferrara, robed in crimson velvet, formally announced to Ercole, on the part of his government, that the League was concluded, and that he and the Florentines would have to stand alone, unless they joined it. A few days later, the League was published in all the cities of the Venetian Republic, with the greatest triumph and solemnity. It was poor consolation for Comines that at night, after viewing the pageants, the ambassador of the Turk "came to talk with me by means of a certain Greek, and was with me four hours in my chamber, being very desirous that his Prince and the King my master might enter together into amity."¹

Ercole was profoundly perplexed. In a somewhat ineffectual way, he had striven against this League from the beginning. As early as December, when the rupture between Lodovico Sforza and the Most Christian King seemed imminent (Il Moro being indignant because he had not received Sarzana and Sarzanello, for which he had lent the King a large sum, and because the latter had treated his ambassador, Galeazzo da San Severino, discourteously), Jacopo Trotti had urged the former, in Ercole's name, to keep loyal to France. The result was that Trotti had been kept in the dark, and only gathered from the long and secret interviews of the Venetian ambassadors with Lodovico that something of the kind was in progress.² Ercole realized that, if it came to war, the actual burden of assailing the French would fall entirely upon the Italian States of the League, and he was bent upon keeping out of it, while remaining, as far as possible, neutral. Since his wife's

¹ *Mémoires*, vii. 15 ; *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 298.

² Cf. Balan, v. pp. 419, 437.

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death, he had had no one by him upon whom he could lean ; he had become incapable of taking decided action, and had, moreover, grown scrupulously religious. Closely linked in sympathy with the new theocratic republican régime in Florence,¹ he was disposed to accept Fra Girolamo's prophecies concerning the sacred mission of the French Cyrus. On April 13, the day after the public proclamation of the League, he perplexed his subjects by ordering a public procession through all the city of Ferrara, without stating any cause or reason—though, Zambotto tells us, it was guessed that it was done because of the new League, “a thing that has not much pleased our Duke for his own interests.”² He kept the Ferrarese feast of St. George and the Venetian feast of St. Mark with increased solemnity, and on the latter occasion sent his trumpeters, together with Don Alfonso, when the banner of Venice was carried in state to the church of the saint in Ferrara. While still keeping in touch with the French King at Naples, he expressed to the Doge through his ambassador at Venice, Aldobrandino di Guidone, his great joy at the conclusion of the League, and wrote to the same effect to the Pope, offering him a refuge in Ferrara, if the movements of the French should force him

¹ One of the French officers at Naples offered, through Giovanni Antonio Mariano, to sell Fivizzano, and the other places of the Lunigiana that had belonged to the Florentines, to Ercole. Mariano promptly revealed the whole thing to Neri Capponi, then Florentine ambassador with the French King, and Ercole warmly commended his action. “It seems to us,” he wrote, “that you could not have spoken to him better than you have done ; because, being on such friendly terms as we are with that lofty Republic, and desiring their prosperity and convenience no less than we do our own, we should not have anything to do with matters that we know would cause them displeasure.” *Minute Ducali* of April 4, 1495. Archivio di Modena, *Minutario Cronologico*.

² Zambotto, f. 272v ; *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 299.

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to leave Rome.¹ Nevertheless, the people of Ferrara were enthusiastically French in their sympathies; they still affected French costumes, looked askance at the Visdomino, and shouted "Franza! Franza!" after him in the street. Reports of all kinds floated wildly through the peninsula. Venice and Milan were arming; there were rumours of stupendous preparations in France to cross the Alps in defence of the King. "The Venetians never ceased to speak evil of Duke Ercole and of his subjects, and to work them harm; and they had among themselves invented a song thereon, that ran: *O guerra o non guerra, Ferrara anderà per terra*; so great is the hatred they bear us. But I think that this present year will not pass before they will be utterly undone, by reason of their passing great and incredible pride, by the aforesaid King of France."²

Ercole began to realize that, in the event of the triumph of the League over France, he would be left alone among the princes of Italy, with Milan alienated, to face the hostility once more of Rome and Venice. On the evening of May 9, a secretary of the French King arrived at Ferrara, late after night-fall, and demanded an instant audience. The Duke with some difficulty put him off until the morrow, when the Frenchman gave him to understand, in the name of the King, that his Majesty intended to return peaceably to France, "without harming or injuring any person whatever," and thought of taking the route of Florence and Bologna, in which case the King requested a free passage through the Duchy of Ferrara, with provisions for his forces on the way. Ercole answered that, as to the passage, his

¹ *Minute Ducali* of April 14 and May 2, 1495. Archivio di Modena, *Minutario Cronologico*.

² *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 303.

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Majesty could have it as he pleased ; but as to provisions, it was quite impossible, because the French and Italian troops in the past year had utterly exhausted the country, and left it in the greatest famine. He instantly informed Lodovico Sforza of the demand and of his answer, and communicated the matter likewise to his ambassadors at Milan and Venice.¹

The danger seemed imminent ; from day to day, the Duke feared lest he should be compelled to declare himself for one side or the other. At last he decided to have recourse to the man—his own subject—who was believed to be more in the counsels of the Most High than others, and he appealed to Fra Girolamo Savonarola for guidance.

“ We hear,” he wrote to Manfredò, “ that that venerable Frate Girolamo Savonarola, our Ferrarese citizen, who is there at Florence, has said things publicly and is still saying them in his sermons—things which concern the present needs of Italy, and it seems that he threatens the sovereigns of Italy. And because, as you know, he is a virtuous person and a good religious, we greatly desire to hear what he has said and is saying, and all the details upon which he touches. We wish you to go to him, and, in our name, pray him to tell you something about these needs and what he believes will happen, and especially about our affairs ; and you will diligently inform us of all that you shall hear. We are certain that he will willingly satisfy this our request, for love of us and because of his goodness, and also for the sake of his native land, which he must still have at heart ; and it will all be most grateful to us.” And, in a postscript, he adds : “ Besides what we write to you in the letter, we

¹ Letter from Ercole to the Duke of Milan, May 10, 1495. Archivio di Modena, *Minutario Cronologico*.

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tell you to learn diligently what the said Frate Girolamo preaches, and the threats that he makes, and what he believes about our affairs, and exhort him to pray to our Lord God for us and for these our peoples, in order that His Divine Majesty may have mercy upon our errors. For we hope greatly in his holy prayers.”¹

Thus instructed, Manfredo had a long interview with Savonarola on May 17. The Friar professed himself unable to give an immediate answer to the Duke's demands. “I must first pray to our Lord God,” he said, “that He may enlighten me and enable me to tell his Excellence those things which shall be to the salvation of his soul and the conservation of his State, with the satisfaction of his subjects. When I have done this, I shall write with my own hand to his Excellence.” He still regarded himself as the Duke's subject and Ferrara as his native land, and seemed convinced that, with the grace of God, he could help both in this matter, “especially knowing how devout his Excellence is and of holy life, far more than any other sovereign in Italy.” The ambassador could get nothing more out of him about Ferrara ; but he informs the Duke that the Friar is still keeping the Florentines on the side of France, “showing them that this Most Christian King by all means is to reform the Church, and to be most victorious in all his undertakings.”²

The much desired letter from Savonarola to Ercole was written on May 21. It was inclosed in a dispatch from Manfredo ; its contents were to be kept a strict secret, and Ercole

¹ Letter of May 13, 1495. Cappelli, *op. cit.*, p. 345. Ercole speaks of his *peoples* in the plural, because he includes the inhabitants of his three duchies.

² Dispatch of May 18, 1495. *Ibid.*, pp. 347, 348.

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probably destroyed it as soon as read. At least, it has not been found among the others in the Archives of Modena. The next day, Manfredo called upon the French ambassador in Florence, who had just returned from Montepulciano, whither he had been sent by the King to induce the citizens to return to the obedience and government of the Florentines. In answer to his inquiries as to what the Duke was doing, Manfredo assured his Magnificence that Ercole was keeping absolutely neutral and attending to the affairs of his own State. The Frenchman highly praised this policy of his Excellence, adding that he knew the King bore him great love and affection. He was anxious that Ercole, as a friend to both parties, should mediate between his Majesty and the Duke of Milan for the peace of Italy ; otherwise, he said, it would be impossible to make the French reinforcements, that were hurrying towards Italy to protect their King, turn back when they reached Asti. Manfredo thought that the real difficulty lay in the King's ministers, who hated the Duke of Milan and would intrigue against Ercole's intervention ; but the French ambassador, while frankly admitting that his countrymen had behaved disgracefully in Italy, said that they were all so anxious to get back to France that each one would exhort the King to agree to any arrangement that might be proposed.¹

From Ercole's answer to Savonarola, we can get a fairly clear notion of what the Friar must have written :—

“ We have received your letter, and in it we have right well understood what you have written to us and suggested concerning those things that we desired to hear from you ; and we have noted the remedies that you offer us, with charity and love. Your letter has been very grateful to

¹ Dispatch of May 22, 1495. *Ibid.*, pp. 349, 350.

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us, and we thank you much for writing ; and we are well satisfied thereat, for it seems to us that your suggestions are full of prudence and charity. And although we know ourselves to be sinners, nevertheless we shall strive with all our power to adhere to your suggestions, and to use those remedies that you propose to us. And you, for love of us and for the sake of your native land, will not fail to offer prayers to our Lord God, that He may lend us grace to be able to do all those good works that are acceptable to His Divine Majesty and for our preservation and the benefit of our peoples. Right grateful to us, too, will be that little book which you say you will send us ; and so we pray you to send it to us, when you have finished it, for we are expecting it with desire.”¹

In the meanwhile, Charles had taken alarm, and decided to make his way back to France. Towards the end of May, he left Naples, leaving garrisons behind him and Gilbert de Bourbon-Montpensier as his viceroy, and entered Rome at the beginning of June, the Pope having fled from the city at his approach. Comines, who had previously been recalled from Venice, reached Ferrara on the evening of June 1. Ercole came out to meet him, and gave him a magnificent reception. The next morning, “Duke Ercole went to find the ambassador in his room, and together they went to Mass in the chapel of the Duke, which the Duke’s own choristers sang. And then the Duke embraced the said ambassador, accompanied him to his room and left him there to breakfast. The ambassador was right welcome to all the Ferrarese, because the King is much loved by Duke Ercole, and the Ferrarese also are loved by the King.”

¹ Letter of May 26, 1495. *Ibid.*, p. 351. The book in question is the Italian version of the *Compendium Revelationum*.

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Ercole rode with him all over Ferrara and showed him the Barco ; they held long secret converse in the rooms looking upon the garden, where the Duke passed the hot days. On June 4, Comines went on his way towards Bologna, the Duke and his kinsmen riding with him out of Ferrara, "with trumpets and pipes and great love."¹

From Bologna Comines went to Florence, where he spoke with Savonarola : "I asked him whether the King should pass out of Italy without danger of his person, seeing the great preparation the Venetians made against him, whereof he discoursed perfectlier than myself that came from thence. He answered me that the King should have some trouble upon the way, but that the honour thereof should be his, though he were accompanied but with an hundred men, and that God, who had guided him at his coming, would also protect him at his return. Adding notwithstanding that, because he had not done his duty in the reformation of the Church, but had suffered his men to spoil and rob the people, as well those that took his part and voluntarily received him into their cities, as his enemies : God had pronounced sentence against him, and would shortly scourge him. Nevertheless, he bade me tell him that, if he would have compassion on the poor people, and endeavour himself to keep his men from doing evil, and punish the offenders (as he was bound by his office to do), that then God would revoke His sentence, or at the least mitigate it ; adding thereunto that he ought not to think it a sufficient excuse, that he in his own person did no harm. He said, moreover, that himself would go and tell the King thus much, and so indeed he did, and persuaded with him to restore the Florentine

¹ *Diario Ferrarese*, coll. 304, 305.

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places to them. When he spake thus of God's sentence, the death of my Lord the Dauphin came suddenly to my mind." ¹

At Siena—where Comines met the King and the latter "solaced himself with the dames"—they heard news which precluded all possibility of a peaceful passage. The Duke of Orleans, who had been reinforced at Asti, had taken the offensive and occupied Novara (June 11), in spite of the express commands of the King not to attempt anything against the Duke of Milan. Charles "therefore was well assured that the Venetians would declare themselves his enemies: for they sent him word that, if he invaded the Duke of Milan, they would aid the Duke with their whole force, according to their League lately made, and their force was great and in a readiness." ² He at once left Siena and moved on to Poggibonsi, where Savonarola met him and dissuaded him from his purpose of restoring Piero de' Medici. Avoiding Florence, the King pressed on to Pisa, where he left a garrison, and advanced thence through the Lunigiana towards Parma.

Ercole, under pressure from Milan, had promised to send Don Alfonso with a considerable force to the army of the League, as a kind of counterbalance to the presence of Don Ferrando on the other side.³ But the continual passing of

¹ *Mémoires*, viii. 2.

² *Ibid.*, viii. 3.

³ In a curious dispatch to Jacopo Trotti, of May 31, 1495, Ercole states that he cannot lend the Duke of Milan any more light horse; he has only about forty mounted *balestrieri* (crossbowmen) left, whom he always keeps near him for his personal guard when he goes out of the city or rides in the Barco, chiefly because of the machinations against his person of the Da Groppo of the Padovano, "of whom you know several were hanged here at Ferrara, when there was the affair of Messer Niccolò da Este," and the Counts of San

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envoys and messengers between Ferrara and the French camp, the Duke's refusal to go in person to Milan, his delay in sending Alfonso and the hostile bearing of his subjects towards the Visdomino, had roused suspicion and indignation. At Venice there was much talk of the Duke's evil disposition and perpetual animosity towards the Republic, of his plotting with France against it; and, on June 13, two Venetian ambassadors, passing through Ferrara on their way to Bologna, would not leave their *carretta* nor pay their respects to the Duke. "His Lordship and the Ferrarese were hated by all Italy universally."¹ Alfonso started for Milan at night on June 15, with the Count Albertino Boschetti and thirty-five persons of his household, leaving his soldiers to follow him. He took no subsequent part in the campaign, but remained in Milan as lieutenant of the Duke's council and governor of the citadel.

Seriously alarmed at the threats of the Venetians, who had put troops into the Polesine, Ercole assured Lodovico that he would give him every aid in the recovery of Novara, and protested to Venice that he would lend no sort of assistance to the French in their passage. But no one believed him. At the instance of Lodovico, as also for the interests of his own subjects, he made Ferrando and Bernardino de' Prosperi, who was with him in the French army, dissuade the King from his intention of passing through the Garfagnana; but he kept in constant touch with the French,

Bonifazio of Verona, "who would offend us, if they could, because of that Count Bernardo who was executed here for his demerits." Being so near the borders, they could easily get to the gates of Ferrara, without his having any intimation of it. Archivio di Modena, *Minutario Cronologico*. The Count Bernardo da San Bonifazio was beheaded for murder in 1473.

¹ *Diario Ferrarese*, coll. 307, 308. Cf. Sanudo, *La Spedizione di Carlo VIII in Italia*, pp. 380, 381, 414.

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and insisted that Don Ferrando, who wished to return to Ferrara, should follow the King wherever he went. At the first news of a skirmish, he impartially congratulated the victor, no matter to which party Fortune had shown herself favourable.¹

An ineffectual attempt had been made in Ercole's name by Antonio Costabili to make peace between France and Milan ; but Lodovico had cut short the negotiations. On July 1, Ercole left Ferrara with four hundred horsemen, and went to Reggio, giving out that he was going to make a last effort to reconcile the Duke of Milan and the King. The documents in the Modena Archives make it clear that this was done under direct pressure from Lodovico ;² but Sanudo says that Ercole took with him " many carriage-loads of tapestry and silver plate. It was rumoured that he was going to give the passage to the King, and for this he brought these trappings, to be able to receive his Majesty honourably." Before leaving Ferrara, where he left his brother

¹ Letters and minutes of June 26, 1495, to Alfonso at Milan and Ferrando in the French camp, concerning the proposed French passage through the Garfagnana ; of June 28, to Alfonso, expressing his pleasure that the French have been beaten ; of July 3, to Ferrando, bidding him tell the King how glad he is that Aubigny has been victorious, and keep near his person. Archivio di Modena, *Minutario Cronologico* and *Carteggio dei Principi*.

² On July 1 Ercole wrote to Lodovico : " Both by the letter of your Excellence and by the writing of Messer Jacopo Trotti our orator, we have learned how much your Excellence desires that we should go to Reggio, saying that our person in that place will assist your affairs at Parma. To this we answer that, to satisfy your Excellence, as is our desire in all that we can, we will transfer ourselves right willingly to Reggio, and, as far as it is in our power, we shall not fail to favour the affairs of your Lordship." To Trotti, he says that Lodovico has insisted that he should go in person to Reggio, " to be able to know what is going on in the Parmesano and in the army." Archivio di Modena, *Minutario Cronologico*.

Sigismondo as his vicar, Ercole told the Visdomino that he went to please the Duke of Milan and that he wished to be a good son of the Signoria, but not an enemy of the King of France. But the Venetians declared that he was sending powder and victuals through the Reggiano to the French army, and Corio accuses him of being "a whole-hearted favourer of the French, amongst whom he had his son as hostage, desiring that Charles should be the arbiter of Italy."¹

The King had passed through Pontremoli, "the very entry into the mountains," where "Friar Jerome's prophecy proved true, which was that God would lead the King by the hand, till he were out of danger; for it seemed that his enemies were blinded and bereft of their wits, in that they defended not this straight." Beyond Pontremoli he stayed five days in a valley near a small village, "his army being almost famished, and his battle lying thirty miles behind his vaward in the midst of huge and sharp mountains, over the which such great cannons and culverins passed then, as never had passed before."² The Maréchal de Gié with Gian Jacopo Trivulzio—who, exiled by Lodovico, had entered into the Neapolitan service and then (with the consent of King Ferdinand) into that of France, and now, for the first of many times, was leading the foreigner against his own countrymen—and the vanguard reached Fornovo three days before the King's main body, whose Swiss with great labour and difficulty were conveying the royal artillery over the mountains. "Hitherto in all this voyage," writes Comines, "we had no war; but now it began." Beyond

¹ Sanudo, *op. cit.*, pp. 445, 460; Malipiero, *Annali*, p. 353, implies that Ercole hoped to receive the King in Reggio; Corio, iii. p. 586.

² Comines, viii. 4.

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Fornovo the forces of the League—or, more strictly, the army of Venice with a portion of the power of Milan and a handful of Papal troops—barred their further progress. The Marquis of Mantua held the supreme command; with him was his uncle, Rodolfo Gonzaga; while the Milanese contingent was captained by the Count of Caiazzo, Francesco da San Severino, the eldest of the sons of Roberto. Both Rodolfo and the Count of Caiazzo had served the French in the preceding year. With the exception of the Stradiots, light-armed Greeks and Albanians in the pay of Venice, and a company of Germans, it was an Italian army: “the finest and most potent,” wrote the Marquis to Isabella, “that for a long time has been seen in Italy, fit to win honour in any great enterprise. This army alone will not only suffice to resist the French, but to extirpate them perpetually.”¹

A couple of skirmishes on July 1 and 5 with the vanguard, in which small parties of French were cut off by the Stradiots and their heads carried in triumph on lances, raised the spirits of the Italians. The Ferrarese force—six hundred horse which Ercole had been obliged to send—came into the camp on the morning of July 2; but Alfonso remained in Milan.

At about noon on Sunday, July 5, 1495, the King himself with his main body came down the mountains and took up his quarters in Fornovo. He was encamped in a valley a quarter of a league broad, between two little hills, through which runs the Taro. The enemy were on the hill to the right, hardly half a league away, “so that we were forced to pass just before them, the river running between us; for not-

¹ Letter of June 21. Luzio and Renier, *Francesco Gonzaga alla Battaglia di Fornovo*, p. 211.

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withstanding that on the back side of the hill on the left hand (underneath the which we were encamped) there lay another way that we might have taken, yet would we not do so, lest we should seem to fly." "There fell also this night a terrible rain, and such lightning and thundering as was never since the world began : so that heaven and earth seemed to go together, or that this foreshowed some great inconvenience to ensue. For notwithstanding that we knew well that the reverberation of these great mountains (at the foot of the which we lay) made this thunder seem greater than indeed it was ; and further, that thunder and lightning be natural in a hot country, especially in summer ; yet seemed they at that present the more dreadful and terrible to us, because we saw so many enemies encamped before us, we having none other means to pass through them than by battle, our force being so small as it was."¹ The King had not more than nine thousand men with him, as he had weakened his power on the way by leaving garrisons at various places and sending troops to Genoa ; the army of the League amounted to some thirty thousand.

Sanudo declares that, the day before the King came down from the mountains to Fornovo, Ercole came disguised into the French camp to speak with his Majesty, and assured him that the Venetians did not mean to fight.² According to Corio, he sent letters to him to a similar effect. Although

¹ Comines, viii. 5.

² *Op. cit.*, pp. 485, 517. It is worth noticing that the Venetians frequently accused Ercole of going about in disguise, to do them harm or to spy their proceedings. Before the outbreak of the war of 1482, he gave an emphatic and contemptuous denial to a similar accusation that he had gone disguised to examine the new Venetian forts on the frontier. *Minute Ducali per Roma a Battista Bendedei*, January 27, 1482. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio degli Ambasciatori* —Roma.

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Comines gives no hint of these somewhat melodramatic proceedings, it seems fairly clear from a subsequent statement of his that, previous to the battle, Ercole had attempted some sort of mediation between the King and Lodovico;¹ and, up to the last moment, Charles was contemplating the possibility of a peaceful passage. The Duke waited at Reggio in agonized suspense, while, all night and the following morning, the rain fell in torrents, the lightning flashed over the town and the thunder reverberated among the distant hills. He had staked the safety of his Duchy upon the victory of the French, his religious hopes on the verification of Fra Girolamo's prophecy. Presently there came a rout of mounted men through the storm, clattering through Reggio's quiet streets. They were his own soldiers—Don Alfonso's company—mingled with light-armed Stradiots, flying from Fornovo, spreading the news of a royal victory of France. In his haste Ercole was for once taken off his guard. He sent towards the field of battle to gain further particulars, and then dispatched a messenger to his brother Sigismondo, informing him of the event and bidding him tell the Visdomino.

The actual facts of the battle of Fornovo are too well known to be repeated here.² Assailed in the van by the Count of Caiazzo, in the rear by the Marquis of Mantua, with the flower of the Italian chivalry, the King had shaken off their

¹ Comines, when they got safe to Asti, sent to inform the Duke of Orleans of "divers treaties that were entertained between the King and the Duke of Milan, in one of the which myself negotiated by the Duke of Ferrara's means" (viii. end of 7). Cf. Ercole's letter to Lodovico of July 1, quoted above.

² They are superbly related from the French point of view by Comines (viii. 6), from the Italian standpoint by Corio and Sanudo. For the whole literature of the subject, see Luzio and Renier, *Francesco Gonzaga alla Battaglia di Fornovo*.

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attack, and hurled them back, broken and in disorder. "Undoubtedly," says Comines, "it is impossible for men to meet roughlier than we met." The Stradiots and Italian infantry had made the merest pretence of supporting the onslaught, but had rushed "like flying eagles" upon the royal baggage. The whole thing had lasted but an hour, in the utmost confusion, in thunder and lightning and torrents of rain. Charles himself, left alone in the pursuit, had narrowly escaped falling into the hands of the enemy's cavalry. About three thousand Italians had been slain, including the second in command, Rodolfo Gonzaga, "who was a virtuous and a wise gentleman, and loved us well, and bare arms against us with an evil will."¹ The French took no prisoners, their camp-followers butchering the fallen men-at-arms with the hatchets they used to cut wood. According to Comines, the French had lost less than a hundred men, but Corio estimates the number at about a thousand. The Bastard of Bourbon had been taken prisoner by the Marquis of Mantua, who had shown small capacity as a general, but very great personal courage throughout the fight. The royal baggage and treasures, with all the spoils from Naples, had fallen into the hands of the Greeks and Italians.

A portion of the Venetian forces had remained inactive in their camp in reserve, the Provveditori considering, in Corio's phrase, "that in this battle would be decided the fate not only of Italy but, as it were, of all the Universe; because, if Charles were defeated, he lost only his army, but if the Latins lost, Italy was exposed to extreme danger."

¹ Comines, *loc. cit.* Rodolfo's death is celebrated in finely sonorous lines by Ariosto, in the poem *Ad Albertum Pium* (*Carm.* i. 2).

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Both sides claimed the victory. "God had performed that which Friar Jerome promised," writes Comines, "to wit, that the honour of the field should be ours; for considering our small experience and evil government, we were unworthy of this good success that God gave us, because we could not then tell how to use it." The Marquis of Mantua wrote to his sister that he had delivered Italy, "brought forth the liberation and liberty of Italy," and when we stand in the Louvre before that most superb of votive pictures which he bade Mantegna paint for him, *La Madonna della Vittoria*, the man's self-deception seems for the nonce almost sublime. The battle, the bloodiest in Italy since two centuries, had been fought on the morning of Monday, July 6, 1495.

It must be said that Charles' behaviour was not that of a victor, but gave considerable colour to the Mantuan vaunt. The next morning, Comines crossed the river and conferred with the Marquis, the Count of Caiazzo and the two Provveditori, about an armistice. But by midnight the King had decided to retreat with all speed. Before dawn the French "turned our backs to our enemies, seeking wholly our own safety," closely followed by Caiazzo's light horsemen who harassed their rear, and at a more respectful distance by the rest of the army—which turned off to join the Milanese force that (reinforced with Germans and Flemings from Maximilian) kept Orleans besieged in Novara. Charles got safe to Asti with all his artillery, while the boastful dispatches that the captains of the Italian army sent to Lodovico roused Ercole's warmest indignation:—

"We tell you," he wrote to Jacopo Trotti from Reggio, "that verily we are much astonished that that most illustrious Lord does not perceive that the truth is very seldom

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told him, and that many lies and things untrue are written to him by the Count of Caiazzo and the others ; for, as you have seen, the Count of Caiazzo writes that he is closely pursuing the King of France, and represents him as practically taken, and, nevertheless, he does not get near him, nor do we believe that he has any wish to capture him, nor that he can capture him, seeing that his Majesty by now must be in Asti and wherever he wishes. But the said Count and the others write and behave in that way to make a show of doing something, and they make that Lord's brain turn round, and yet the things are of such a kind and so evident that his Excellence ought to perceive it himself. We could not refrain from having these few words with you.”¹

It was muttered in Ferrara that Alfonso's contingent at Fornovo had been purposely put into the front and left unsupported, that French might destroy French. Thirty of his men-at-arms, together with the condottiere, Galeazzo da Correggio, had been killed, and the rest, as we saw, had fled from the field, spreading the report of the Venetian defeat. The Visdomino wrote furiously from Ferrara to his government, complaining of the way in which Ercole had announced the event and that the Ferrarese were shouting for France in the streets, showing “great consolation” at the reported rout, and insulting his messengers. In Venice itself there was great exultation at the news from Fornovo ; piazzas and canals blazed with festive lights, while salvos of artillery thundered out the triumph of St. Mark. “We heard in Ferrara,” writes the Diarist bitterly, “how in Venice the Venetians had fired salvos for the defeats which they have had, to make their subjects believe that they

¹ *Minute Ducali* of July 14, 1495. Archivio di Modena, *Minutario Cronologico*. Jacopo Trotti died in the following October.

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have been victorious, and not to forgo their custom; which always was, is, and will be, when they have lost something of theirs or had bad tidings, to have guns fired, bells rung, and to keep holiday." But there were cries of "To Ferrara! To Ferrara!" and on the Rialto the boys sang an improvised song:—

Marchexe di Ferrara, di la caxa di Maganza,
Tu perderà 'l stado, al dispetto dil Re di Franza.¹

The artisans and shopkeepers offered to pay double taxes, if the Republic would assail Ferrara; "nevertheless, the Signoria would not at this time make any demonstration against that Duke, although while he was in Reggio he had sent much victual into the camp of the King of France, and barrels of powder for his artillery, but for which the King would not have been able to use it."²

Ercole now realized his critical position, and, somewhat tardily, instructed his ambassador in Venice, Aldobrandino di Guidone, to congratulate the Signoria on the victory of the League. Aldobrandino was refused audience on July 13; but on the next day the Doge and Collegio received him. When he began to speak of his master's joy in the victory of the army of the League, the Doge stopped him: "What army of the League? We say that it is ours, and we have paid for it, and not the League." Aldobrandino then said that there were reports in Venice that his master had not done his duty at this crisis; these reports were

¹ "Marquis of Ferrara, of the House of Maganza, thou shalt lose thy State, in spite of the King of France."

² Sanudo, *op. cit.*, p. 485; Malipiero, p. 355; *Diario Ferrarese*, coll. 310, 311. It is quite evident from Comines that these Venetian accusations were false. But Malipiero (p. 363) says: "Some carts of the Duke of Ferrara have been taken, which were going to the French army with victuals and powder."

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false, and Ercole was ready to stand the test. In answer, the Doge had the letters of the Visdomino read aloud, expressed his great dissatisfaction with the Duke, and dismissed the orator.¹ “And in Ferrara then, in the name of Duke Ercole, there was made a public proclamation, that no one should dare to speak against the Venetians ; for they had complained to the Duke that it seemed that they were looked upon badly by the Ferrarese—as they are for their pride and haughtiness.”² Nevertheless, the Venetians clamoured for war ; a crowd of three hundred persons went at night to Aldobrandino’s house, and made a tremendous uproar under his windows.

The Pope had by now excommunicated the Most Christian King. A papal envoy was at Florence, making fresh insistence with the Signoria, telling them that, unless they resolved to join the League, the whole of Italy would turn against them with good cause, seeing that by their obstinacy they were working the ruin of Italy. But the Republic professed itself unable to break with the King. “Ambassador,” said this wily prelate to Manfredo, “you would do well to induce the Excellence of your Lord henceforth to declare himself openly on the side of the League, lest the Powers of Italy should complain that he was a better Frenchman than Italian. Far better for him would this be in the sight of all Italy, than his wishing to remain neutral, as he has done up to now ; for *he that is not with me, is against me.*” To this scarcely veiled threat from the Pope, which was made in the presence of the Milanese ambassador, Manfredo answered that Ercole was wise enough to know his own business, and that he could better

¹ Sanudo, *op. cit.*, p. 486 ; Malipiero, p. 364.

² *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 311.



16.00

Girolamo Savonarola.

(in the character of St. Peter Martyr)

By Fra Bartolommeo

16.00

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serve the cause of the Duke of Milan and the other potentates of Italy, by thus remaining neutral, than he could do if he declared himself entirely on the side of the League.¹

Ercole was exceedingly impatient to see the book that Savonarola had promised him, the *Compendium Revelationum*, from which he anticipated much spiritual guidance in this present crisis. He bade Manfredo go to the Friar and implore him to let him have it; if it was not yet printed, he wanted to have a copy taken of the manuscript and sent to him at once. "If necessary, we will keep it secret as long as he shall wish, and we will not show it nor make it known in any way." Savonarola told Manfredo that the book would be ready next week, and that he had ordered a copy to be printed on special paper for the Duke; if he had known how eager the latter was, he would have had it transcribed by hand. And, sure enough, next week the long-expected book arrived at Ferrara, in two copies—one on special paper for the Duke, the other for his physician, Lodovico de' Carri. Manfredo, in forwarding them, explained that, seeing that the Duke's copy was something special, he had tried to pay for the expense of the paper; but the Friar would not hear of it. Ercole eagerly and instantly read the little book through, and wrote an enthusiastic letter of thanks to the author. He did not, however, commit himself in any way to the theories expressed in the work, but again earnestly implored Savonarola to pray to God for him and for Ferrara, "that our affairs and those of our native land may pass well, and be under the protection of the Divine Majesty."²

¹ Dispatch from Florence of July 26, 1495. Cappelli, *op. cit.*, pp. 360, 361.

² Letters of August 10 and 15, 1495, from Ercole to Manfredo

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The Duke of Orleans was now hard pressed in Novara, his men reduced to the utmost extremities by hunger. In response to a pressing invitation from the King, Ercole came forward again as peacemaker and mediatory at the end of September, passing to and fro between Milan, where Lodovico kept with his power, and Vercelli, where the royal army lay. Pandolfo Collenuccio, whose genius for interviewing would put the most enterprising of modern journalists to the blush, had been holding high talk with Savonarola at Florence. On his return to Ferrara, he wrote to Ercole, full of the expectations which all Italy had in his Excellence's influence with the King of France, but unable to pass over in silence the fact that the Friar was very sceptical about the reality of this peace:—

“When I took leave of his Paternity, I asked him what conclusion I should bear away with me about this peace. He said to me: ‘Messer Pandolfo, I shall answer you with the words of Ezekiel the Prophet: *And ye shall know that I am the Lord God. Because they have deceived my people, saying: Peace, peace; and there is no peace; and one built up a wall, and others daubed it with untempered mortar. Say unto them that daub without tempering, that it shall fall.*’ This was the reply that he gave me, which I have afterwards read in Ezekiel, and it is in the thirteenth chapter. I have wished to tell this to your Lordship, because it could right well be that you, with your goodness and with the sincerity of

(Villari, *Savonarola*, i. appendix, doc. xxxvi. 1, 2); Manfredo's dispatches of August 13 and 20; letters dated Comacchio, August 23, from Ercole to Manfredo and to Savonarola (Cappelli, *op. cit.*, pp. 362, 363). The book in question was the Italian version of the *Compendium of Revelations*. In October, Savonarola similarly sent the Duke the Latin version with a short letter (Villari, *op. cit.*, i. doc. xxx. 1), which Ercole gratefully acknowledged (letter of November 24, Cappelli, *op. cit.*, p. 366).

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your heart and devotion to God, will be the cause of this decree being changed, as in His wisdom God did in Isaiah and Jonah. However, *the hearts of kings are in the hand of God.*"¹

Notwithstanding Savonarola's forebodings, the peace was concluded in October at Vercelli, between Charles and Lodovico. Novara was surrendered, Milan paying an indemnity to the Duke of Orleans; the French ships taken at Genoa were to be restored, and Lodovico was to aid Charles against Naples, if the latter returned in person to the enterprise (Ferdinand had re-entered his capital in the very month of the battle of Fornovo); the castelletto of Genoa (which city, it will be remembered, the French claimed as a fief), as a pledge of Lodovico's fidelity, was to be put into Ercole's hands as neutral for two years. It was an insincere peace on both sides, and the attitude of the Venetians, who had two months given them in which to enter into it, but to whom Ferdinand had consigned six coast towns in Apulia, was questionable. But Charles was only anxious to return to France, and left his garrisons in Apulia and the Abruzzi to their fate.

Ercole, through Manfredo, had promptly informed the "Ten of the War" at Florence of the arrangement about Genoa. In November, he took possession of the castelletto and garrisoned it with men and artillery—though he experienced the utmost difficulty in getting the necessary funds, which he understood had been promised, from either of the high contracting parties.² Then he returned to Ferrara, his

{ ¹ Dispatch of October 12, 1495. Cappelli, *op. cit.*, p. 406.

² Letters of October 27 and December 10, 1495, dated Milan and Ferrara respectively, to Don Ferrando. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*. After the battle of Fornovo, Charles had

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faithful subjects noting with approval that he seemed in good health and decidedly well pleased with himself—*molto di bona voglia e grasso*, as the Diarist has it.

Savonarola had already expressed to Manfredo his intention of appealing to the Duke to take up his cause, in the event of the Pope forbidding him to preach.¹ The year 1496 found Ercole completely under his influence, fondly attempting to transform Ferrara into an ideal city in accordance with the Friar's precepts. He began the year by proclaiming a black fast of two days throughout the duchy, in consequence of an alleged apparition of the Blessed Virgin in Rome, to avert the fearful scourges of war and famine that were said to be about to fall upon Italy—himself setting the example by fasting rigidly with all his Court. A few days later, the Friar sent the Duke what appears to have been a printed first draft of his book, *De Simplicitate Christianae Vitae*, with a letter full of hopes "that I may soon see my earthly country, by virtue of your Excellence, bring forth some spiritual fruit." He begs him to keep the little book secret for the present, or at least only to let others read it with him in his own room, as he intends to revise it. In view of the terrible tribulations that are rapidly approaching, let his Excellence be solicitous about divine things; especially let him purge his city of wicked men, and put the offices into the hands of the good, taking away all power from the evil and infamous, "because these greatly provoke the anger of God."²

made Ferrando Duke of Amalfi; but Montpensier his viceroy, disregarding the young Ferrarese prince, conferred the duchy upon a French noble.

¹ Dispatch of October 26, 1495. Cappelli, *op. cit.*, p. 365.

² Letter of January 10, 1496. Villari, *op. cit.*, i. document xxx. 2. The first published edition of the *De Simplicitate Christianae Vitae*

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At Easter, Ercole made a vigorous effort to begin this reformation of Ferrara, according to Savonarola's exhortations. A strongly-worded edict was published from the balcony of the Palazzo della Ragione against blasphemy, unlawful gaming, sodomy, married men keeping concubines in public or private, letting houses to harlots or their panders; and steps were taken to see that it was carried out. All shops were to be shut on feast-days, and nothing was to be sold on these days in the piazza, save what was really necessary. Unfortunately, the Duke went further, and abandoned his former enlightened policy towards the Jews. All the "Hebrews and Marrani" living in Ferrara and the Ferrarese territory were to be compelled to wear the yellow badge of shame sewn on to the front of their dresses, and on Low Sunday all the Jews in Ferrara were obliged to attend a sermon in the Duomo, at which Ercole himself and Anna were present.¹

Hearing of all these measures from Ercole's Dominican confessor, Fra Tommaso, Savonarola expressed the utmost satisfaction; but he exhorted the Duke not to rest there. "Let your Lordship especially set diligent watch, supervision and restraint upon your ministers and officials, which matters more than all the rest. These are often wont to derogate the clemency, goodness and reputation of the Sovereign by perverse suggestions, and wicked and impious exactions, and by fraudulent adulation; wherefore such men should be abhorred as enemies of your

is dated August 28, 1496; an Italian version, by Girolamo Benivieni, followed in October.

¹ *Diario Ferrarese*, coll. 322, 323. The worthy preacher's eloquence, however, was wasted: "On that day one Hebrew was baptized, after the sermon in the Vescovado; but he was not one of those who had been to hear the sermon."

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Excellence.”¹ Unfortunately, Ercole continued to be culpably lax on this point, until a severe lesson was taught him. Gregorio Zampante of Lucca, his captain of justice in Ferrara, was universally and justly hated. Such was the unlimited confidence that the Duke had in him, that Zampante “cared not for any man in the world, not even for the sons and brothers of his ducal Lordship, and he made all the subjects of the Lord tremble,” with arbitrary fines and cruel tortures; he lived luxuriously, and piled up a vast sum of money from his extortions. Ercole had knighted him and would hear nothing against him, though the people hated this “enemy of God and man” with so deadly a hatred that he dared not cross the road or go to speak with the Duke, without an escort of soldiers or archers. On July 18 of this year, while Ercole was at Carpi, attempting to arbitrate between the Pio who were, as usual, at each other’s throats, two medical students and a converted Jew entered Zampante’s house after dinner at the hour of repose, and disembowelled him with a dagger. Leaving him dead, they rode furiously through the quiet streets, loudly proclaiming what they had done, and escaped to the Venetian frontier, all the people helping them on their way.² The Duke, on his return, made no attempt to punish any one, but took the lesson to heart. A few months later, he made an example of Count Niccolò Ariosti, who had been guilty of cruelty and oppression in his capacity of ducal commissary at Lugo; he was fined five hundred golden ducats, deprived of his post, and declared incapable of ever again holding office in the Duchy.³

¹ Letter of April 27, 1496. Villari, *op. cit.*, i. doc. xxxvi. 4.

² *Diario Ferrarese*, coll. 330-333. Cf. chapter xiii., pp. 480, 481.

³ *Ibid.*, coll. 337, 338.

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In the meanwhile, Lodovico Sforza was plying the Friar with honeyed words, while his agents were intercepting his letters and endeavouring to compromise him with the Pope and the King of France. He produced faked letters, either written in Savonarola's name by his foes in Florence or composed for the occasion by his own agents, and sent copies to Ercole, who promptly placed them in Savonarola's hands, through Manfredo, and received the Friar's assurance that they were forgeries. Manfredo still pressed the latter for advice to Ercole, in the growing rumours of a new French invasion, to which the Friar could only answer that he would not fail to pray continually to God that He would illumine the Duke as to the best course for him to pursue.¹

The situation, indeed, was growing more difficult every day. Throughout 1496, there were perpetual rumours of a French expedition to support the claims of the Duke of Orleans upon Milan and to reconquer the Kingdom of Naples, where the House of Aragon was rapidly winning back all that it had lost. Comines tells us that the French were assured of the Duke of Ferrara's friendship and aid.² Trivulzio was actually at Asti in May, and a French ambassador, who came to Ferrara at the end of the month,

¹ Dispatch of April 28, 1496. Cappelli, *op. cit.*, pp. 369, 370. Communications between Ercole and Savonarola continued uninterruptedly throughout this year. Besides constant advice, the Friar sent the Duke a rosary. "We have received," writes Ercole to Manfredo, "the rosary which you have sent us in the name of our venerable Fra Girolamo, the which has been as acceptable to us as any other thing that we could have received, and therefore we would have you take an occasion greatly to thank him for it in our name." Archivio di Modena, *Minutario Cronologico* (May 17, 1496).

² *Mémoires*, viii. 15. He says that Ercole had promised to aid them with five hundred men-at-arms and two thousand foot-soldiers.

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received a popular ovation. The Venetians openly threatened the Ferrarese frontier, alike on the Polesine and in Romagna, though Ercole assured them that he was willing "that their boundaries should extend to the piazza of Ferrara itself."¹

The hesitancy of the Duke of Orleans, who, the young Dauphin having died at the beginning of the year, now saw himself the heir to the French throne, was probably what delayed the invasion. But the French preparations and their alliance with the Swiss had alarmed the League; Lodovico Sforza and the Pope, supported by Venice, induced the King of the Romans to come to Italy, on the plea of taking the imperial crown—in reality as little more than the condottiere of the League for the relief of Pisa. In July, Lodovico and Beatrice met the Emperor at Mals in the Tyrol, whither most of the Italian States sent ambassadors. Some of the imperial ministers' objected to the presence of the Ferrarese envoy, seeing that Ercole had not joined the League; and Maximilian declared that, when he arrived in Italy, he would expect the Duke of Ferrara to come to him in person, to swear fidelity and to be reinvested with the imperial fiefs of Modena and Reggio. The envoy protested his master's devotion, but declared that no renewal of the investiture was necessary.²

Maximilian arrived in Italy in August, ostentatiously greeted by the Cardinal Carvajal in the name of Pope Alexander. Venice and Milan were growing deadly suspicious of each other's designs concerning Pisa, while Ercole, resolute to keep firm in his alliance with France, invented excuse

¹ *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 326.

² Dispatch of Dandolo and Foscari, July 26, 1496. *Dispacci al Senato Veneto di Francesco Foscari e di altri oratori presso l'Imperatore Massimiliano*, pp. 784, 785.

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after excuse for not coming to see the Emperor at Vigevano in the Milanese. "He cannot come," said Antonio Costabili, who had succeeded Trotti as Ferrarese ambassador at Milan, "because he is old and absorbed in his devotions ; but he will send Don Alfonso, his son." The Duke feared lest he should be bidden surrender the castelletto of Genoa and break faith with France. Maximilian was indignant at the suggestion that Ercole was bound to write to the King of France for direction, and bade the ambassador order him absolutely to come to him. The Moro sent Antonio Costabili to Ferrara to urge him to obey, but Ercole for once was unshaken. When Maximilian entered Genoa on September 27, the Ferrarese garrison in the castelletto fired a few salvos in salute—but only under compulsion from the governor of the town.¹ The story of Maximilian's abortive siege of Leghorn, the timely succour of the French fleet, and the would-be Caesar's retreat to the Tyrol in December, need not be retold here.

Ercole's bearing throughout this episode had estranged Milan, and increased the suspicion of the League against him. Lodovico's agents professed to have intercepted incriminating dispatches from the Ferrarese ambassador in France,² and it was universally believed that Savonarola and Ercole were working hand in hand to bring the King back to Italy. Ercole, however, bade Manfredo warn the Friar in his name to be on his guard against circumvention and treachery, since "from afar they cast the nets to bring the fish to shore."³ To add to his perplexities, the Pope

¹ Foscari's dispatches of September 9, 13, 14, 27. *Ibid.*, pp. 856, 877, 882, 896.

² Foscari's dispatch of September 11. *Ibid.*, p. 870.

³ Letter of November 17, 1496. Cappelli, *op. cit.*, p. 373. The warning is, for once, against the French.

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had attempted to appoint his own nephew, Juan Borgia the Cardinal of Monreale, to the Bishopric of Ferrara, and when the Duke, who desired this, the chief benefice of his dominions, for his son Ippolito, refused to give up the possession, Ferrara was put under the interdict.¹ The death of the Duchess Beatrice, on January 3, 1497, practically severed all the ties that bound Ercole to Lodovico, and, when Alfonso's young wife Anna followed her to the grave on November 30, there was little left to keep the two Dukes united.

Very early in the morning on March 6, 1497, Manfredo sought out Savonarola in the name of the Duke, assuring him of the affection and love that the latter entertained for him, and the faith he had in the things that his Paternity prophesied. He exhorted him to pray to God for Ercole, and implored him to give him some definite statement of what he believed was going to happen, and to tell him what he should do at this crisis. Savonarola answered that he thanked the Duke much for the love he bore him, and that he had no need to remind him perpetually to pray to God for him, as he did so continually, and all the more willingly as he knew that he was praying for a spiritual man and one

¹ Although it was not until September, 1496, that Ferrara was interdicted, this trouble had begun in 1494, when Ercole wrote (on December 12) to the Cardinal Borgia himself: "If we had not a son who was a Cardinal, verily we could not desire that the said Bishopric should be bestowed upon another than your most reverend Lordship, both because of your own virtues and worthy qualities, as also in respect of the Holiness of our Lord, whose good servant and son we are. But since we have the most reverend Cardinal of Este our son, who has need of benefices, and since that Bishopric is the first benefice and the most important that we have in our dominion, it seems to us fitting and perfectly just that we should retain that benefice for our son rather than leave it to others." Archivio di Modena, *Minutario Cronologico*.

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who lived like a Christian and a Catholic. As to Manfredo's last request, he would pray to God for inspiration to be able to give Ercole the light he needed. On the following evening, the Friar suddenly sent for Manfredo, and gave him a slip of paper, written in his own hand, to convey with the utmost security to Ercole, on the understanding that the latter would keep most secret this inspiration of his, which he revealed to him "under the seal of confession." On the slip of paper which Manfredo forwarded to Ercole, after solemnly pledging both the Duke and himself to absolute secrecy, were these words:—

"The *Friend* is not rejected, but he is deceived by his own ; if he choose, he will still do great things and get rid of every one ; and, therefore, it is a dangerous thing to leave him. I do not think, however,—and this I say of myself—that it would be bad to use some astuteness with our enemies, in order not to enter into any danger, until God opens his eyes. We shall aid the affair with our prayers. On the other hand, it would be good to aid it with prudence, by some trusty person who could speak to him securely and open his eyes. It should be a religious and wise person, and one who believed in these things. This must not be communicated to any one, because I have not yet divulged this thing to any here ; but your faith has merited this secret from the Lord, in Whom alone you must trust, taking opportune measures for your own right living and that of your subjects, for *cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm.*"¹

¹ This note accompanied Manfredo's dispatch of March 7, 1497. Cappelli, *op. cit.*, pp. 374, 375. Ercole's bastard, Don Giulio, was in Florence, and had been present at the Friar's sermon in the Duomo. Savonarola was also in correspondence with the younger

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The mysterious friend, the *amico*, is the King of France, and the hint—which goes perilously near treason to Italy—is obviously that Ercole should summon the invader, and, until he comes, temporize with the League. Manfredo urged him to adopt the suggestion, and to send the religious but wise person to urge up “the Friend.” But the inadequacy of such a message, professedly from God, struck a chill to the Duke’s heart, and it was not long before his faith in the prophet wavered. In June came the tumult in the Duomo at Florence, followed by the long-expected bull of excommunication against Savonarola from Rome. Although at Milan Antonio Costabili vigorously supported the Florentine ambassador in defending the justice of the Friar’s cause to the face of Lodovico himself,¹ Ercole could not conceal his anxiety and perplexity. A little later, one of his circle, probably the Fra Tommaso already mentioned, informed Savonarola that the Duke was seriously alarmed at the tardiness of the fulfilment of his prophecies. The Friar at once wrote an impassioned exhortation to Ercole to persevere in the faith. God is not mutable and hasty like man, but sometimes proceeds slowly, to try the faith of the elect and to make more manifest the wickedness of the reprobate. “Similarly the Jews did not believe in the prophets, because it seemed to them that the things they

Ercole d’ Este (the Duke’s nephew) and his wife, Angela Sforza. Cf. Mansi’s Appendix to Baluze, *Miscellanea*, i. p. 588, where Angela is wrongly styled “Duchess of Ferrara.” In a dispatch from Paolo Somenzi, the Milanese orator at Florence, to the Moro, of March 5, it is stated that this Ercole di Sigismondo d’ Este had come on the previous day to Florence, disguised, to hear the Friar preach. Villari, *op. cit.*, ii. p. 6, note 3. Father Lucas, *Savonarola*, p. 225, appears to have confused the uncle and the nephew.

¹ Dispatch of Antonio Costabili to Ercole, June 25, 1497. Villari, *op. cit.*, ii. document vi.

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foretold were long in coming, and so at last they were deceived every time, until their final destruction by the Romans." Let him have lively faith, and in the meantime reform whatever is wrong in his household and Court. In spite of his tribulations, the Friar professes himself confident, and urges Ercole to have no fear. "Read the Holy Scriptures, or have them read to you, and especially the Prophets, as Jeremiah and Ezekiel; and you will find almost everything similar to these times."¹

"With all our power do we thank you," wrote Ercole in reply, "for your affectionate treatment of us and for the good suggestions that you charitably offer us, because we see that they are worthy of your goodness and corresponding to the love that you bear us, and we are extraordinarily obliged to you for it. Verily, for your satisfaction, we assure you that we have hitherto never doubted that those things are to ensue which have been foretold by you, and more than ever are we of this firm opinion and faith that not one iota shall be omitted of what you have prophesied. It is quite true that, seeing the delay and negligence of the King of France, and the little care that he has had for his own honour and for the weal of his friends, we have doubted—and do doubt very much—lest he should not be the man who is to do any notable and eminent achievement; and this doubt of ours is not alien from our faith and belief

¹ Letter of August 1, 1497, in Mansi's Appendix to Baluze, *Miscellanea*, i. pp. 585, 586. In this same month of August, Sanudo describes Ercole as having become "very Catholic," and going about in a carriage with his doctor, Francesco da Castello, who follows him everywhere. Also his half-brother Rinaldo "is entirely given to devotion;" but it is reported that, a few days ago, "Don Alfonxo fece in Ferrara cossa assa' liziera, che andoe nudo per Ferrara, con alcuni zoveni in compagna, di mezo zorno." *Diarii*, i. coll. 706, 707.

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in what concerns you, because in your works we have not seen that the King of France of necessity has to be he who does the things that are to follow ; for, if this thing too had been foretold by you and if we had understood it, we should not have failed to believe it also, steadfastly, as we do the others. And since you have been pleased to visit us with this your sweet letter, we should be glad, and so we pray you earnestly, if you would reveal and assure us of what you think and what is your opinion touching the affairs of the aforesaid King of France, and what good he is to do ; for we esteem you so, that all that you foretell to us will be believed by us as a thing certain ; and also, if such be your desire, we shall take such good care of what you write to us that it will not come to the knowledge of any one, and we, for our greater content, shall receive incredible pleasure therefrom and shall be greatly obliged to you. Offering ourselves continually ready to serve you in everything, we pray you to be pleased to be a good ambassador for us in the presence of our Lord God.”¹

Savonarola delayed some while in answering this letter, praying for many days for light to satisfy the Duke. But at length he could only say that the election of the minister of God had always been revealed to him as conditional, that he still saw no signs that the King was cast off, and that they must trust in God.² In the meanwhile, Bernardo del Nero and his four associates had been beheaded in the courtyard of the Bargello's quarters adjoining the Palazzo Vecchio, for their complicity in the plot to restore Piero de' Medici. Ercole had instructed Manfredo to intercede with

¹ Letter dated Modena, August 8, 1497. Cappelli, *op. cit.*, pp. 382, 383.

² Letter of August 29, 1497. Villari, *op. cit.*, i. doc. xxx. 3.

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the Signoria for their lives, but the sentence had been carried out before the ambassador's instructions reached him. The Florentines had been bitterly offended at the interference of the Duke of Milan—indeed, Manfredo thought that it had hastened the prisoners' deaths—but they were gratified by the terms of the Ferrarese message. In answer to questions as to what his Duke thought of the executions, Manfredo answered in effect that his master had every confidence in the prudence of the people of Florence.¹

But, in spite of his assurances to Savonarola, Ercole was wavering. The Venetian forces from Ravenna were threatening Bagnacavallo, and, Charles not having returned, the time for surrendering the castelletto of Genoa to Milan was at hand. At Rome, the orators of Venice and Milan were openly declaring that, to protect Italy from a new French invasion, the only way was to crush the Italian rebels—the Florentines and the Duke of Ferrara. “They are the cause of the ruin of Italy,” they said; “it is they alone who keep the Most Christian King in hope and in thinking of the affairs of Italy.”² Don Ferrando had returned from France, and the Venetians expressed a wish to take him into their service. He had visited Venice *incognito* at the beginning of November, but the Republic had, against Ercole's will, published the fact. Ercole was at length forced to give way and humble himself again before the great Republic, and go in person to Venice. But before going, he assured Manfredo that this visit of reconciliation was only for purposes of self-protection, and instructed him to inform the Signoria of Florence that his friendship to-

¹ Dispatch of August 29, 1497. Cappelli, *op. cit.*, p. 389.

² Manfredo's dispatch of September 9, 1497. Cappelli, *op. cit.*, p. 392.

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wards them was unbroken and undiminished. On November 16, with his son Don Ferrando, accompanied by the Venetian Visdomino, Ercole left Ferrara for Venice—his subjects liking his journey as little as did the Florentines. The Doge received him most graciously, publicly announced the conclusion of Ferrando's *condotta*, "in order," wrote the Duke, "that we may verily learn, and all Italy understand, the love and affection that this most illustrious government bears us," and made fullest professions of friendship and good will towards the House of Este and their State.¹

The surrender of the castelletto of Genoa and this ducal visit to Venice roused a suspicion in Florence that Ercole had adhered to the League, without previously informing his Florentine allies. Manfredo found it advisable to have a long interview with Savonarola, who perfectly admitted the justice of the Duke's conduct. A few days later, the Ten professed themselves more than satisfied, and anxious for the Duke to mediate on behalf of Florence with Venice for the restitution of Pisa; which he did in the following spring without result.

But, in the meanwhile, the Cardinal Ippolito—Ercole having yielded in the matter of the Ferrarese Bishopric, and Ippolito being made Archbishop of Milan instead—was at Rome, intriguing in his father's interests at the Papal Court,

¹ Letter from Ercole to Manfredo, November 7, 1497, Cappelli, *op. cit.*, pp. 392, 393; letter from Ercole to the Cardinal Ippolito from Venice, November 25, Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*; *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 341; Malipiero, *Annali*, pp. 495–497. "To many it seemed strange," writes Malipiero, "that the Signoria should have wished to give its arms into the hand of the chief of its enemies; but with this appointment, it will keep many rulers of Italy to their duty, and especially the Marquis of Mantua." The Gonzaga, whose secret dealings with France (through his sister Chiara, the widow of Montpensier) had been discovered, had been cashiered from the Venetian service in the preceding June.

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and especially, according to the paternal instructions, currying favour with the Venetian Cardinal Grimani. Ercole was greatly gratified at his conduct. "Your excellent bearing in that Court," he wrote, "has satisfied us so much that, if there could be obligations between father and son, we should consider ourselves to be much obliged to you." And again, a few days later : "It seems to us that our Lord God is directing and governing well the affairs of your most reverend Lordship, and that you are deporting yourself in all your actions with such dexterity and maturity that you facilitate every arduous undertaking and bring it to a successful end."¹ At the end of February, 1498, Ippolito went to enter upon his new office at Milan ; but the result of his stay in Rome had been to draw Ercole still more from Savonarola and towards the Pope. It was, indeed, the beginning of the end, so far as the Duke's relations with Fra Girolamo were concerned.

Hearing that, in spite of the excommunication, the Friar was going to preach the Lent in the Duomo, Manfredo sought him on January 31, and talked to him for a long while upon the subject. Savonarola told him that he most certainly was resolved to preach this Lent, and perhaps even sooner, if it were intimated to him by those who could command him. The ambassador was puzzled. "Do you mean that you expect a commission from the Pope, or from the Signoria here ?" "Not from the Signoria nor even from the Pope, seeing that he is continuing in his usual mode of life, besides that I know he certainly does not intend to remove from me the excommunication ; but from One who is higher than the Pope and all other creatures." Manfredo tried in vain to

¹ Letters of January 10 and 22, 1498. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*.

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dissuade him. "We shall wait for the result and end of the affair," he wrote to Ercole, "by which it will be possible better to judge what foundation it is that Fra Girolamo has, whether it be divine or human."¹ On Septuagesima Sunday came the famous sermon declaring the excommunication invalid and the Pope a broken tool. Manfredo kept Ercole diligently informed; but the Duke's mind was made up. He dared go no further.

An opportunity soon came for him to make an end publicly. In March, Count Gian Francesco della Mirandola published at Florence a defence of Savonarola, and dedicated it to Ercole, implying that he had written it in consequence of a conversation that he had had with him and at his request.² Monsignor Felino Sandeo, one of the Ferrarese prelates of the Curia, urged the Duke to take measures to clear himself. The latter at once wrote back, dissociating himself entirely from Gian Francesco, protesting that he had never consulted him as to the validity of the excommunication. He inclosed a letter to the Pope himself in a similar strain, calling God to witness that he had nothing to do with this publication, and that he had never doubted about the authority and power of the Sovereign Pontiff.³ It has been

¹ Dispatches of February 1 and 8. Cappelli, *op. cit.*, pp. 398, 399.

² *Joannis Francisci Pici Mirandulae Opusculum de sententia excommunicationis injusta pro Hieronymi Savonarolae viri prophetae innocentia*. This Gian Francesco was Ercole's nephew. His father, the Galeotto della Mirandola we have so often met (the brother of the famous scholar), had been urged to repentance by Savonarola in two letters (Marchese, *Lettere inedite di Fra Girolamo*, pp. 124-126), but in vain. Galeotto died in April, 1499; he had been excommunicated for sixteen years and Mirandola was under the interdict, but Alexander gave the widowed Bianca a dispensation to bury him in church. *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 362.

³ Letters from Ercole to Felino Sandeo and Pope Alexander VI, March 26, 1498. Cappelli, *op. cit.*, pp. 399, 400.

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observed that this letter does little credit to the Duke and shows how impossible a religious reformation was, at that epoch, in Italy ; but to me, unless I read the man's character wrong, it appears a perfectly sincere utterance on Ercole's part. He conscientiously believed that even the Borgia held the keys of Heaven and Hell.

Nevertheless, Ercole followed closely every detail in the closing scenes of the tragedy that ended in front of the Palazzo Vecchio on the morning of May 23, 1498. It is uncertain whether he made any effort to save the Friar from his fate ; but it would, in any case, have been in vain. At least, he did not sink to dissimulating his heartfelt sorrow.

Chapter X

IN THE CLOSE OF THE QUAT- TROCENTO

FOR all in Ferrara, high and low alike, Fra Girolamo had remained a saint and prophet throughout. It was whispered that, in the hour that they died, "a nun immured in a column in a church in Viterbo" had seen the souls of the three martyrs—Savonarola, Fra Domenico and Fra Silvestro—carried up into Paradise by Angels singing, that a blind man had recovered his sight by rubbing his eyes with their ashes, that devils had been cast out of forty nuns in a convent at Florence, and that innumerable miracles had been wrought after their deaths. The feeling in Ferrara grew very bitter for a while against the whole Dominican order, which had deserted Fra Girolamo, and especially against its general, Fra Giovacchino Turriani of Venice, who, together with Monsignor Romolino, had delivered him over to the secular arm. When, in the following June, the general chapter of the Friars Preachers was held in Ferrara, the people murmured against them and refused them their usual alms.¹ Ercole himself, however, remained devoted to the Order and on most friendly terms

¹ *Diario Ferrarese*, coll. 353, 354. Zambotto (f. 322v) and Fra Paolo da Lignago (f. 160) similarly bear witness to Savonarola's sanctity, the latter exulting in the evil end of all his persecutors.

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with Fra Giovacchino, who had, for the rest, acted in good faith. But, indeed, the Duke had abandoned the cause of the prophet, even as his brethren in religion.

On the very same Saturday, April 7, 1498, that the miserable fiasco of the ordeal by fire in the Piazza della Signoria at Florence had brought Fra Girolamo's career to so ignominious an end, Charles VIII of France—the new Cyrus of his prophetic dreams, the *Amico* who, he had assured Ercole, had not been cast off by God—had been struck down by an apoplectic stroke at Amboise, and “ended in a few hours the life with which he had, with more impetuosity than ability, disturbed the world, and there was great danger lest he should disturb it anew.”¹

But, with the death of Charles, the danger was by no means averted. The Duke of Orleans succeeded to the throne as Louis XII, and promptly “made known to every one what his inclination was to the affairs of Italy,” by assuming not only the title of King of France, but also those of Duke of Milan and King of Jerusalem and the Two Sicilies, thus reviving at once in his person the claims of the Visconti on Milan and the Angevins on Naples. Borso da Correggio, “with a goodly company of horse and foot,” went as special ambassador of Ercole to France, to congratulate the new sovereign.

There was, however, a short breathing-space, during which war raged, not very fiercely, in Tuscany concerning the liberation of Pisa. The Venetians, under pretext of freeing the beleaguered city from the Florentines, were preparing “a very great war,” as the Ferrarese Diarist has it, and invaded the Casentino. Their forces were commanded by Duke Guidobalddo of Urbino, Astorre Baglioni (who was to fall a

¹ Guicciardini, iii. 6.

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victim in the famous tragedy of the Baglioni at Perugia), Bartolommeo d'Alviano and others. Lodovico Sforza, who saw, in their proposed zeal for the liberation of Pisa, a real intention of taking the place for themselves and generally extending their power on the Mediterranean coast, assisted the Florentines. "It is not true," he said to the Venetian ambassador, Marco Lippomano, "that you wish to maintain Pisa in liberty; you want to subdue it; and when you have got Pisa, you will wish for Leghorn and Genoa. I am jealous for my State, as you are for yours; I shall never allow you to have it."¹ He refused a passage to their troops, and sent money and men to the Florentines.

Ercole kept strictly neutral in this war. One son, Don Ferrando, as a condottiere of the Most Serene Republic, had been forced to march his troops towards Pisa, much against his will; another, Don Sigismondo, was with the Duke of Milan as a sort of counterpoise; while Alfonso was taking a holiday, *si dava piacere*, in Ferrara. We may suspect that neither the soldiering nor the enjoyment could have been very effectual in this year, as all three were paying the penalty of their vices, and suffering more or less severely from the unmentionable disease that was ravaging the Courts of Italy at this time.²

Don Ferrando was as troublesome and as constant a source of anxiety to his father in the service of Venice, as he had been when following the banner of France. Ercole had given passage through his territory to the Venetian forces, to which Lodovico Sforza's hostility had cut off the nearer and easier way of Parma and Pontremoli. Ferrando

¹ Malipiero, p. 506.

² On this unsavoury theme, cf. *Diario Ferrarese*, coll. 359, 360, 362, and Lucrezia Bentivoglio's letter to Sigismondo, Dallari, p. 181.

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marched his men through the Garfagnana, and the Venetian Provveditore ordered him to lay waste the country near Barga, which belonged to Florence. But Ercole wrote him a forcibly worded letter, intended to be shown to the Provveditore, forbidding him to do this, as, Barga lying so near his own territory, it would seem an act of hostility on his part towards his friends the Florentines, especially as these latter had complained at his letting his son go against them and having given him the passage.¹ Ferrando's soldiers, over whom he appears to have had no control, threatened to plunder the Pisans and grumbled against the Signoria, and Ercole suggested that he should hang one, "to give an example to the others that they be wise," as the Signoria had heard a great deal of their bad behaviour.² Although he acquitted himself creditably and the Signoria professed themselves convinced of his faith, Ferrando was as usual very discontented, complained that he was kept short of means, and threatened to return home. Ercole was aghast. "We are much amazed," he wrote to his son, "that you have had the presumption to say that you will go away, for we should not have believed that you would even have dared to think of it. And, therefore, we expressly command you, that on no account must you go away. For, if you were to depart thence without the good leave of the most illustrious Signoria, and it were to be displeased at your departure, as it would be, you would not be welcomed by us, and we should not receive you here in our house nor give you anything; but we should drive you away, as one who had entirely disobeyed our will and commandments, nor ever

¹ *Minute Ducali* to Don Ferrando, July 1, 1498. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*.

² *Minute Ducali*, August 23, 1498. Archivio di Modena, *loc. cit.*

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more should we see you gladly, because your error would be too great and presumptuous.”¹

For the rest, Ercole seemed absorbed in his devotions and his buildings. Every day he rode to hear a solemn Mass sung, now in one church and now in another ; he seemed more bent than ever upon his public works in the new quarter of the city, where preparations were being made for erecting the great equestrian statue of him, which should be where the rather insignificant monument of Messer Lodovico now rises ; he redecorated and restored nearly all the chief churches and monasteries. “He keeps himself happy,” writes the Diarist, “by going every day on horseback to Mass, now to one, now to another church, and by ordering them to be decorated ; and then he has about ten little boys, sons of different gentlemen, from six to seven or eight years old, whom he keeps in his house, and has them taught letters and singing by a master, and he pays the expenses of everything for them, and he brings them together into his room, when he has nothing to do, and disports himself with them.”²

The carnival of 1499 was brilliant in Ercole’s city of peace, with the usual dances and dramatic performances in the Sala Grande of the Corte Vecchia, where Bianca della Mirandola (destined in two months to be a widow) acted as chief hostess and queen of the revels. The *Eunuchus* of Terence was first played, with entirely new costumes and decorations ; nearly three hundred actors took part in the comedy and interludes together ; in one of the latter a kind of pantomime raised much applause, in which a hunting party

¹ *Minute Ducali*, December 14, 1498. Archivio di Modena, *loc. cit.*

² *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 359.

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while feasting was attacked by a bear, "who played his part so excellently that many thought he was real." On subsequent days two Plautine comedies, the *Trinummus* and the *Poenulus*, were performed, with morris-dances, one of which represented an allegory of the pursuit of Fortune. On February 12, which was Shrove Tuesday, they danced till dark; then the torches were lit and the windows closed, and the *Eunuchus* was played again with new morris-dances, including a masque of wild men and nymphs hunting a bear, a panther and an ape (that is, men dressed in the skins of these beasts), which somewhat primitive amusement appears to have pleased the learned Zambotto immensely. The Marchesana Isabella arrived a few days later. The three comedies were repeated in private for her to see, and, on the second Sunday of Lent, the Duke gave a great ball in her honour, after which the *Eunuchus*, the one that pleased her most, was performed again.¹ In the following night, a number of things that had been used for the decorations were stolen; but the Duke, who had been in unusual pleasure this carnival and did not wish to have to punish any one, would have no inquiry made.² It was noticed that, during the fortnight that she stayed in Ferrara, Isabella gave public dances in her father's palace, notwithstanding that Lent had begun.³

Ercole had already attempted to bring about peace

¹ This carnival, especially with reference to the entertainments, is fully described in four letters from Giovanni Pencaro, a native of Parma attached to the Ferrarese Court, to Isabella d' Este Gonzaga, published by Luzio and Renier, *Commedie classiche in Ferrara nel 1499*, pp. 182-189. There is a slighter account, in which the names of the Plautine comedies are not given, in Zambotto, f. 327v.

² Zambotto, f. 328.

³ *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 361.

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between Florence and Venice ; but at first his efforts had no result. During the winter, however, the war had slackened on both sides ; and Lodovico Sforza was seriously alarmed at the alliance which was in preparation between Venice and France. After some three months' preparatory negotiations at Ferrara, Lodovico prevailed upon Ercole to accept the invitation of the Venetians, and go personally to Venice as mediator—though he seems to have had some difficulty in inducing the Florentines to consent to this course. According to Guicciardini, the Moro hoped that, if peace were brought about and by his means, the Venetians would be less desirous of the coming of the French and better disposed towards himself ; while the Florentines were afraid that Ercole, if he pronounced judgment in Venice, would be compelled to give a decision more favourable to the Venetians than he would have done of his own accord.

On March 15, 1499, Ercole with his household and the Milanese ambassador set out for Venice, where he was sumptuously received and entertained in the historical palace of his House. The Florentines were represented by Giovanni Battista Ridolfi and Paolo Antonio Soderini. At Venice, on March 25, Ercole witnessed the event that his son-in-law of Milan had striven to avert : the solemn proclamation of the new League between Venice and France.¹ The ducal palace and the piazza were superbly decorated, but a great wind was blowing, and a banner, falling, narrowly missed killing the Doge himself.

¹ The alliance had been concluded at Angers on February 9. On February 21, while Isabella was at Ferrara, the son of the Visdomino came to announce the fact to the Duke, in the name of the Signoria, and Isabella had instantly written to inform her husband. Luzio and Renier, *Delle Relazioni di Isabella d' Este Gonzaga con Lodovico e Beatrice Sforza*, p. 664. This son of the Visdomino, whom Isabella does not name in her letter, is young Pietro Bembo.

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After much difficulty and discussion, the matter was absolutely committed to Ercole's arbitration. On April 6, he read his decision to the Collegio. He had had a very difficult task, and undeniably showed an unusual degree of moral courage. His decision was a compromise, but very decidedly in favour of the Florentines. The Venetians were to evacuate the Pisan territory and to restore Bibbiena to the Florentines, with the other places which they had taken ; in compensation, however, for the costs of the war, the Florentines were to pay them 100,000 ducats in twelve annual payments ; the Florentines were to have back their old rights over Pisa and its territory, but to give the Pisans a complete amnesty for the past, as well as to grant them a number of fresh privileges and liberties, both political and commercial.

Though the Doge and the Collegio maintained a correct and courteous bearing as long as Ercole was present, the Venetians, high and low, were furious at his decision. That night a mob gathered round his palace, hooting and hissing, shouting abuse and calling him a traitor. He was insulted in the streets, until neither he nor the ambassadors of Milan and Florence dared to appear in public. To appease in some part the piteous appeals of the Pisan envoys, the chief Venetian senators induced Ercole to make a few additions, which did not, however, materially alter the decision. In fact, no one was satisfied. The Pisans declared that they were more enslaved than ever ; the Florentines said that they got nothing but the bare name of dominion, and were being forced to pay the expenses of those who had unjustly assailed them. Nevertheless, after a long discussion in the Pregadi, it was decided by a large majority of votes that Venice would abide by the Duke's arbitration, and

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recall her army and Provveditori. The Florentines similarly ratified the peace and sentence; but not the additions, which had been made without their knowledge. The Pisans determined to resist to the last, rather than return under the Florentine yoke.¹

Ercole left Venice "with the malediction of all the city," as Malipiero has it. When he got back to Ferrara on April 13, the officials of the Visdomino took the trivial revenge of insisting upon searching the baggage of his retinue, on the plea that the conditions of the Venetian dogana had not been observed.² The Ferrarese ambassador at Rome, Feltrino Manfredi, wrote that the Pope was amazed and indignant at Ercole's conduct.³ Nevertheless, to the impartial student, it must be perfectly obvious that he had conscientiously, and without human respect, endeavoured to perform a very difficult duty for the peace and welfare of Italy. "Verily, in this negotiation for an agreement and in giving our decision," he wrote to Don Ferrando, "we have done our very best for that magnificent community of Pisa, not only because of our respect for the most illustrious Signoria of Venice, which has it under its protection, but also because of the love and benevolence that we have borne and bear to the Pisans, and because of the desire that we entertain for the peace and quiet of that city and of the others of Italy. And although the Pisans are perchance aggrieved at some part of our decision, yet we doubt not that, if they consider well the whole, they will be quite satisfied; and every day will they

¹ Guicciardini, iv 3, 4; Malipiero, pp. 536-541; Villari, *Niccolò Machiavelli*, i. pp. 328, 329. This general discontent on both sides may be taken as fair evidence in favour of the substantial justice of Ercole's decision; but Pisa held out until 1509.

² *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 363.

³ Balan, v. p. 498.

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recognize more that we have fully considered their interests, and so also for the future we shall not fail to give them every benefit and favour. If we could have done more for their advantage, we would have done it right gladly. But it was also necessary to act in such a way that the result should be an effectual peace.”¹

In the meanwhile the alliance between France and Venice, for the division of the Duchy of Milan between them, had been solemnly ratified. The adhesion of Alexander VI had been procured, not without difficulty, by the exaltation of Cesare Borgia—who was, as his Holiness assured the French King, the dearest thing that he possessed on earth.² Cesare had abjured the Cardinalate, and had received from Louis the Duchy of Valence, with a princess of Navarre, Charlotte d’Albret, for wife, and probably a promise of effectual support in his designs of building himself up a vast principality in Italy itself.

Lodovico Sforza found himself left alone to face the storm. He had hoped to assail the Venetians first; but all his prospective allies failed him. Maximilian would willingly have helped, but his hands were tied by his own struggle with the Swiss. The King of Naples promised to send a force under Prospero Colonna and to assail the Papal States, but did neither. The Turk alone was in arms in his favour. As to the minor Powers, the Florentines remained neutral, and continued the siege of Pisa.

Ercole, since the death of Beatrice, had grown more and more alienated from the Sforza; to the Moro’s appeal for aid, he answered that the frontiers of Venice were too near

¹ Letter of April 19, 1499. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*. See Appendix II. document 18.

² Brief of September 28, 1498. Pastor, iii. p. 417.

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the gates of Ferrara, and that he must guard his own house. In spite of a request from Ippolito—who was now resident in his diocese of Milan and warmly favouring the cause of the Sforza—he refused to allow Girolamo dal Forno, one of Lodovico's condottieri, a safe-conduct to raise infantry in the Modenese.¹ He was aghast at the intelligence that Ippolito was having a suit of white armour prepared, with the intention of personally fighting in the ducal ranks, and professed himself exceedingly scandalized at such warlike conduct in a prelate of the Church :—

“ If we still have any paternal authority over your Lordship, we command you to desist from these warlike ways, and to strive to live like a good Archbishop and a most reverend Cardinal. If, perchance, any one has persuaded you that, by arming, you could give the victory to the most illustrious Lord Duke of Milan or benefit him, hold for certain that he who gave such advice loves not his Excellence, and your Lordship less. For your taking up arms would offend our Lord God and provoke Him to anger, and would make Him contrary to the side for which you bore arms. But if you wish to help the said most excellent Lord Duke (as we all should wish), let your Lordship do your proper office. Pray to our Lord God for the safety and victory of his Excellence and of his armies, and make all the religious and secular clergy throughout your province pray ; be present yourself at these prayers, as is your duty, without intermission. These will be good white arms, without danger of irregularity and with great merit. If you armed, you would commit a mortal sin and be worthy of excommunication. And if you were present when any one was killed, you would

¹ Letter of August 7, 1499. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*.

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be irregular ; because it is not lawful for simple clerics to combat, save for the necessary defence of their persons, when they are assailed by others and cannot otherwise escape ; much less is it lawful for a Cardinal and Archbishop. And you must consider that every little unpopularity which you have at Rome will, in these cases (as could easily happen), exaggerate your sin ; besides the infamy and the indelible stain which you would acquire from it, and the danger of your life or of the mutilation of some limb. Then fear our Lord God and acknowledge His benefits ; remember that, if you do not keep His commandments and if you are not grateful to Him, He will make you recognize your error by the sword of His justice. And if it seems to Him that your excess does not merit mercy (as this would not merit it, being only too contrary to the Christian faith and religion), He will do worse to you.”¹

The French army under Trivulzio and Ligny had crossed the Alps in July, and begun hostilities in August. Lodovico's resistance collapsed. Fortress after fortress fell before them, and the surrender of Alessandria showed that all was lost. Although the Turk was preparing to assail them in the Friuli, the Venetians crossed the Adda and occupied Lodi. Deserted by the Marquis of Mantua and by the Count of Caiazzo, Lodovico fled from Milan to Como, and thence made his way to join Maximilian in the Tyrol. On September 6, Trivulzio and the royal army entered Milan without any resistance ; “and of the Duke of Milan men spoke no more, even as though he had never been in the

¹ Letter of August 19, 1499. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*. As this long letter is a characteristic example of the tortuous and strange ways in which Ercole's mind and heart worked to what was, no doubt, a perfectly just and proper conclusion, I give the full text in Appendix II. document 20.

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world.”¹ Cremona surrendered to the Venetians. A month later, King Louis himself made his triumphal entry into the Lombard capital.

On the news of the fall of Milan, Ercole had instructed his ambassador, Ettore Berlinghieri, to go to Trivulzio and assure him of his fidelity to the cause of France. All things alleged to the contrary are mere fictitious inventions of the Venetians, “in order that they may more easily dispose of us according to their appetite, although from us they have never received any offence or injury.” “But our Lord God has lent us grace that, also in this enterprise undertaken by the Most Christian King for the Duchy of Milan, we have persevered in the devotion that we have always borne towards his Majesty and towards the Crown of France; nor have we lent any aid to the most illustrious Lord Duke Lodovico of anything—not of our men-at-arms, not of crossbowmen, not of cannons nor of shot, for which things his Excellence many times besought us; and because we did not gratify him, he complained of us publicly, as can be proved by two hundred gentlemen in Milan.” It is true that Don Alfonso, who was in the Duke’s service before there was any enmity between him and the Crown of France, had been compelled to send his soldiers who were in Lodovico’s pay; but Ercole is convinced that neither the King nor Trivulzio will consider that he has failed in his duty to his Majesty because of this, especially as he has not allowed Don Alfonso himself to serve his enemy. He has postponed his affinity with Lodovico for his faith and devotion towards the Most Christian Majesty; and if the latter and Trivulzio want to judge his actions fairly, they must not lend any faith to what they hear from Venice against him, unless it is con-

¹ *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 369.

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firmed from another source. In answer, Trivulzio strongly advised Ercole to come in person and do reverence to the King on his arrival in Milan ; which the Duke decided to do, especially as he heard that Louis was going to take Ferrara under his protection. " When we shall find ourselves in the presence of his Majesty," he wrote to Manfredo Manfredi, who was still his orator to the Republic of Florence, " while we act for ourselves, we shall not omit likewise to do all we can for the benefit of that lofty Signoria." ¹

Accordingly, Ercole, with his sons Alfonso and Ferrando, hastened to meet the King, and accompanied him in his triumphal entrance into Milan. The Cardinal Ippolito had shared Lodovico's flight into the Tyrol. With the exception of King Federigo of Naples, all the Italian princes, either in person or by their ambassadors, had come to congratulate the French conqueror, or to make their peace with him. The Florentines found the greatest difficulty in this respect ; but Ercole, who stayed in Milan nearly a month and was treated by the King with special marks of confidence and esteem, found that he, too, had to pay a large sum of money before he could get his duchy taken under the royal protection—his conduct, since he had consigned the castelletto of Genoa into the hands of Lodovico Sforza, being regarded as unsatisfactory.² His Majesty took particular exception to the fact that Ippolito was still with the fugitive Duke, and Ercole dispatched one of his chancellors, Gian Giorgio Seregnio, with an imperative letter to the Cardinal, bidding him return without delay, " come flying," to Italy. " If

¹ *Minute Ducali* of September 14 and 21, 1499, to Ettore Berlinghieri, and of September 23 to Manfredo Manfredi. Archivio di Modena, *Minutario Cronologico*.

² So at least Guicciardini, iv. 4.

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you do not return, you will lose your benefices that you have in this dominion, and will put us into new danger of losing our State, without any fruit or benefit or relief to that most illustrious Lord Duke. And, therefore, we urge you and command you by our paternal authority, that, without any excuses or delay or any loss of time, you return immediately, and as quickly as Gian Giorgio himself ; for the celerity of your return imports more than we can express in writing.”¹

Giovanni Bentivoglio, who was represented by his son Annibale, was compelled to obtain the protection of France for his House for a similar financial consideration. In spite of his previous oscillations between France and the Sforza, the Marquis of Mantua, who had met the King at Pavia, appears to have experienced less difficulty. Louis heaped honours upon him, and took him into his service, with a stipend of twelve thousand francs.²

But, indeed, the royal protection was to be most imperatively needed by both Ferrara and Bologna. Cesare Borgia, henceforth in virtue of his new French dukedom known as Il Valentino, was in the company of the King and high in his favour. He had large schemes on hand.

The Pope had resolved to take this opportunity of the alliance with France to build up for his son an ample duchy—to develope, perhaps, into a kingdom—by crushing the feudatories of Romagna, the petty tyrants who ruled the Romagnole cities as vicars of the Church. He now published Bulls declaring that Pandolfo Malatesta of Rimini, Giovanni Sforza of Pesaro (but lately the Pope’s own

¹ Letter dated Milan, October 21, 1499. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*. Ippolito returned to Ferrara in November.

² Cf. L. G. Pélissier, *La Politique du Marquis de Mantoue pendant la lutte de Louis XII et de Ludovic Sforza*, pp. 94-97.

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son-in-law), Caterina Sforza Riario and her young sons who ruled Imola and Forlì, Astorre Manfredi of Faenza, Duke Guidobaldo of Urbino, and the Varani of Camerino had forfeited their fiefs, for not having paid the tributes due to the Holy See. According to the promise he had made, the French King put at Cesare's disposal 300 lances under Yves d'Allègre, at his own cost, and 4,000 Swiss to be paid by the Pope—nominally to recover those revolted cities for the Holy See, in reality to conquer them for the Borgia.

Included likewise in Romagna were Ravenna and Cervia ; but these had passed in the earlier part of the century into the hands of Venice, the ally of France, against whose power nothing could be attempted. His ducal rank and his position among the princes of Italy differentiated Ercole d' Este from his Romagnole neighbours. Alexander seems, indeed, for a moment to have contemplated the possibility of grasping Ferrara for his son ; but the opposition of Venice and the protection of France compelled him to abandon the project.¹ Bologna also, strictly speaking, was a city of the Papal States ; Giovanni Bentivoglio ruled it, not as vicar of the Church, but as a sort of informal head of the Republic ; it seemed an equally tempting prize, and one far easier of acquisition than Ferrara. Here, too, however, there was the newly acquired French protectorate in the way. Nevertheless, both Ercole and the Bentivoglio realized their danger.

But neither of them ventured to cross the dreaded Borgia's path. Ercole gave Cesare's French and papal auxiliaries the passage through his dominions, both through Ferrara and the Modenese—Cesare himself with the main body taking the latter course. This was in November. At Bon-

¹ Cf. Pastor, iii. p. 425, note 5.

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deno, in the Ferrarese territory, a party of French sacked the place, murdered the ducal Podestà, Messer Battista Bendedei, with several ecclesiastics and a number of other persons, and hung out the banners of the Pope and the King of France on the castle ; and they repeated the same outrages, or worse, a few hours later in the Borgo di San Luca. Ercole was helpless : " we had to have patience." ¹ Imola surrendered to the Borgia at the end of December ; a few weeks later, he was lord of Forlì, and Madonna Caterina was sent as prisoner to Rome. His further progress was stopped by the recall of his French troops. Exasperated by the brutalities of the French and the prepotency of Trivulzio, whom the King had left in his stead, the Milanese had risen at the approach of Lodovico and the Cardinal Ascanio with a hastily collected force of Swiss and Burgundians ; in February, 1500, the Sforza were once more lords of Milan.

Two days before Lodovico re-entered his capital, the news of the revolution in Milan reached Ferrara. In spite of Ercole's French policy, the Moro had been popular in Ferrara (his conduct in the matter of the peace of Bagnolo had been forgotten), and there was much rejoicing. In the evening a mad Servite monk, Fra Marcello, rushed through the streets, beating a drum and followed by a rabble of boys. Shouting " Moro ! Moro ! " they went to the house of the Venetian Visdomino, and made a tremendous uproar at his door. The outraged functionary protested to the Duke, and there were hints of possible complications with France and Venice. On the following afternoon, first from the balcony of the Palazzo della Ragione and afterwards through all the city, it was solemnly proclaimed to the sound of trumpets

¹ *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 373.

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that the Duke's Excellence was greatly displeased at what had happened, and that he commanded that for the future, in Ferrara and its suburbs, no one should dare to name or talk of any Lords or Kings whatever, under penalty of a fine of a hundred gold ducats for each adult offender, or more according to his Lordship's discretion, and, in the case of boys, a sound whipping, twenty-five *staffilate*, for each of them.¹

Ercole, realizing the purely ephemeral character of Lodovico's success, sent Giovanni Valla as special envoy to the French King. Avoiding the towns obedient to Milan, he was to go, with all possible diligence and speed, into the presence of the Most Christian King, to assure him that the Duke had abstained from rendering favour or aid of any kind to Lodovico, "although he is our son-in-law and his sons are our grand-children." He was to lay stress upon the kind reception and treatment that the French troops had experienced in passing through the ducal territory, although, for the abominable cruelties and atrocities that they committed, "they would deservedly have all been cut to pieces by our subjects." He was to deny emphatically that Ercole had held any communication with Lodovico before the latter returned into Italy, or that he had sent any ambassador to the King of the Romans, or ever sent to Lodovico the least invitation to come back; he had not lent him the slightest assistance in his return. But the Duke complained bitterly of the way in which the Venetians had calumniated him, both with the King and with his ministers, and of the unfriendly attitude of the Cardinal of Rouen. "We have persevered in our faith with his Majesty,

¹ *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 378.

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both before and after the return of the Lord Lodovico into Italy, as is notorious to all Italy. So shall we always persevere, if his Majesty perseveres in keeping us under his protection truly and sincerely, as is a thing worthy of his Majesty, and not in words only and without effect.”¹

The triumph of the Moro was brief indeed. Reinforcements and a new general, la Trémoille, from France put fresh heart into the royal army. At Novara, Lodovico's Swiss refused to fight against their countrymen in the hostile army, and, on April 10, the hapless Duke was betrayed to the French, as he passed out of the city disguised and armed as a Swiss. Sent as a prisoner to France, refused admission to the King's presence, he expiated his treason to Italy by that long living death in the castle of Loches, “a narrow prison thus inclosing the thoughts and ambition of him whom first the boundaries of all Italy could scarce confine.”² Betrayed to the Venetians and by them surrendered to the French, the Cardinal Ascanio found an easier imprisonment at Bourges, and was released a few years later to take part in the Conclave on the death of the Pope.

Ercole had carefully abstained from rendering the slightest assistance to Lodovico in his restoration, and had, therefore, nothing to fear from his fall. Giovanni Valla congratulated the King on his victory, and assured him that Ercole “had favoured and assisted him in his affairs more than those had done who had shared in the gains [i.e. the Venetians], seeing that he had persuaded all those who could injure his Majesty not to lend aid to the Lord Lodovico, of which the Lord Lodovico had himself publicly complained.” The King

¹ *Istruzione a Giovanni Valla*, March 2, 1500. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio degli Ambasciatori—Francia*.

² Guicciardini, iv. 5.



Pope Alexander VII

By Patoricchio

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answered that he held Ercole "for his good friend, and for a wise and excellent Lord;" but he complained of the bearing of the Marquis of Mantua.¹

It was the year of Jubilee, and the corruption in the Church and the Curia had reached its height. The pilgrims, who flocked to Rome for the indulgences, saw with amazement Cesare Borgia triumphing as the conqueror of Forlì and Imola, and receiving the Golden Rose from the hands of the Pope. Frantic papal rejoicings hailed the overthrow of the House of Sforza. In August, Lucrezia Borgia's second husband, the young Alfonso of Bisceglie, was strangled in the Vatican by Cesare's orders. The scandal of the Pope's private life was renewed.² "The Pope," said Paolo Capello, one of the Venetian ambassadors, on his return to Venice, a month after young Alfonso's murder, "grows younger every day; his reflections do not last a night; he wants to live, and is of a happy nature, and only does what is to his own advantage; his whole thought is to make his children great, and he cares about nothing else."³ Yet there were some that, with a full knowledge of all that was in progress and though themselves in personal danger, came to the Eternal City, rather than lose the indulgence of the

¹ Dispatch of Giovanni Valla, May 20, 1500. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio degli Ambasciatori—Francia*. In spite of his alliance with France, Gonzaga had been treating with both Maximilian and Lodovico Sforza, and had sent his brother, Giovanni Gonzaga, to fight in the latter's army. Louis at first thought of depriving him of Mantua, and making it over to the Venetians in exchange for Cremona and the Gera d'Adda, but ultimately contented himself with inflicting a heavy pecuniary fine. See Pélissier, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-115.

² Cf. Pastor, iii. p. 431, note 2. Giulia Farnese resumed relations with the Pope, who also "favoured" one of Lucrezia's damsels.

³ *Relazione fatta im pregadi, per Sier Polo Capelo*. Sanudo, *Diarii*, iii. coll. 846, 847.

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Jubilee though granted by a Borgia. The Duchess Elisabetta of Urbino, though her House was one of those marked out by Cesare for destruction, came disguised "to make the fitting visitation of the churches ordained to gain this Holy Jubilee," as she herself puts it in her letter to her brother, the Marquis of Mantua, who had written strongly to dissuade her from going.¹ Under the protection of the Colonna, she fulfilled the conditions, and returned unmolested to Urbino. The alms of the pilgrims were made over to Cesare Borgia, for his projected conquest of Romagna. The one papal action during the year of Jubilee not absolutely unworthy of a Christian sovereign, nor shameful in one who claimed to be the Vicar of Christ and the successor of Peter, was the attempt to organize a new Crusade against the Turks—who were beating Venice by sea and land. But here, too, it is impossible not to suspect that the Pope was moved, in part at least, by the desire to win the support of the Venetians for the designs of his son.

"As I doubt not that your most illustrious Lordship knows well," wrote Giovanni Bentivoglio to Ercole, "this infirmity has need of a better and more efficacious remedy, and it would be necessary that our Head—he to whom pertains the government of our Religion—should do as Christ did, when He said: *For I have given you an example*. And this would be more to the point than attempting now to disturb the poor lords of Romagna in their States, and keeping this harassed Italy in so great combustion that some are induced rather to desire the coming of the Turks,

¹ Cf. Gian Francesco's letter, of March 17, 1500, in Luzio and Renier, *Mantova e Urbino*, p. 105, and Elisabetta's answer, dated from Assisi, March 21, in Gregorovius, *Lucrezia Borgia*, document 20.

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than to think of opposing them in any way. But if this private passion be put aside, and thought be taken for the universal good and for the conservation of the Faith and our Religion, I am certain that lords and communes and all men will be found excellently disposed to do all that shall be needed.”¹

At the beginning of the year, Ercole had announced his intention of going in person to Rome for the Jubilee. “For many years,” he wrote to the Marchesana Isabella, “we have thought and almost firmly intended to go to Rome for this Jubilee, if our Lord God in His grace allowed us to reach this year. And so we have decided to depart at once and to go with a small company, with the intention of returning quickly to avoid the concourse of the multitude. We have wished to give particular notice of this thing to your Ladyship, in order that you may know this deliberation of ours, and can tell us if you desire anything from us in this our voyage. Do not omit to pray, and to have prayers offered up to our Lord God, for our safety.”² But a fall from his horse had delayed his departure, and subsequent events—the Borgian invasion of Romagna and the

¹ Letter of September 19, 1500. Dallari, pp. 192, 193.

² Letter of January 1, 1500. The same day he gave notice to the Pope, to his various ambassadors and others, of his intention of going immediately to Rome, “to satisfy a singular devotion of ours, and to gain the indulgence and plenary remission of our sins.” He had previously, on December 29, been in negotiation with the Cardinal of San Giorgio, who was then in Florence, to borrow his palace in Rome, the present Palazzo della Cancelleria, “for ten days at the longest, with the beds and all the things of the kitchen. We shall go with few persons and not more than fifty horses, because, as we are making this journey for our devotion, we wish to go as pilgrims.” *Minute Ducali* of December 29, 1499, and January 1, 1500. Archivio di Modena, *Minutario Cronologico*.

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fate of the Milanese duchy—induced him to abandon the idea.

Instead, he had solemn processions and novenas in all the cities of his duchies in March, to implore the Divine mercy upon Italy and the liberation of Christendom from the Turks; and he had them repeated in May and June, "for good reasons known to him and because it is always well to keep on good terms with God," as the Ferrarese Diarist put it. On the latter occasion, the nine processions took place one on every third day in Ferrara; all the clergy walked in front, with more than four thousand children dressed in white, each bearing a banner upon which was painted an image of Christ. Then came the vicar of the absentee Bishop of Ferrara, followed by the sons and brothers of the Duke on foot, and, at the last, Ercole himself on horseback, because he was still unable to walk. At Modena, seven thousand persons took part in the processions.¹ At Whitsuntide a revivalist preacher, one of the Dominicans from the convent of the Angeli, preached for three days in the Duomo, and exhorted the people to repentance. In consequence of his eloquence, the Duke had a decree solemnly proclaimed from the windows of the Palazzo della Ragione, to forbid the keeping of concubines, playing forbidden games, blaspheming God or Our Lady or the Saints, openly or in secret, committing sodomy.² It is difficult to imagine that the decree could have had much effect in an Italian city of that epoch.

¹ *Diario Ferrarese*, coll. 385, 386; Jacopino de' Bianchi, pp. 194, 195. Tomasino de' Bianchi gives a long description of the procession in June at Modena, in an Appendix to his father's chronicle, pp. 269-273.

² *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 387.

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The fact was that Ercole himself was at this time in bad health, very anxious about all things, and much concerned with the affairs of his soul. Disappointed at the failure of the reforms that seemed promised by Savonarola, disillusioned by the nonfulfilment or the method of fulfilment of the Friar's prophecies, he had thrown himself heart and soul into a very remarkable religious movement—a movement too little noticed by Church historians—which may be said to have come to a head in this year.

The chief aim of this movement was to fight the corruption in the Church and in human society, to oppose the degradation and immorality of the Curia, no longer by the violent tirades of a Savonarola, but by a revival of the cult of St. Catherine of Siena. More than a hundred years before, she had striven to heal the wounds of Italy; she had attempted to unite the Powers of Christendom against the Turk; she had bidden high and low strip themselves of self-love, enter the cell of self-knowledge; she had denounced in burning words the corruption of the clergy; she had urged the Pope, in Christ's name, to think of souls and not of cities, to choose between the Temporal Power and the salvation of souls. In her words seemed to many the very remedy for the malady of these new times. And this year of Jubilee was chosen by "certain devout servants of God" to bring out her letters, as a protest against the hideous state of things in the Church. Aldo Manuzio, the publisher, made himself their spokesman, in a letter dated from Venice, September 19, 1500, to Francesco Piccolomini, the Cardinal Archbishop of Siena. "I pray you," he writes, "to communicate these sacred epistles to the Holiness of the Pope, in order that he may consider the epistles sent to Pope Gregory XI and Pope Urban VI as

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written to his Holiness. Moreover, let your most reverend Lordship show those that were sent to the Cardinals then to the Cardinals of our own time, in order that what was written by that Sacred Virgin, inspired by the Holy Spirit, may be carried out for the reformation of the Spouse of Christ, and the Crusade may be made against the pagans ; for Our Saviour promised this to her, when she asked it with most ardent prayers, and, since it has not been, it must be by all means, because God cannot lie.”¹

But this movement had a far more remarkable manifestation than in letters alone. While the Borgia was every day crucifying Christ anew in Rome, women appeared all over Italy, robed in the black and white habit that St. Catherine had worn, bearing in their bodies—their hands and feet and side—the wounds of Christ’s Passion. Several of them professed to be in constant spiritual intercourse with Catherine herself, and all, to a greater or less extent, imitated her mode of life, had identical visions, strove to renew her work. Even as God before the Incarnation sent holy men and prophets—thus begins a very remarkable little tract in the publication of which Ercole was undoubtedly concerned²—“ so, in these terrible anxieties and extreme daily adversity, He would not desert His Christian people ; but now, for the joy of the good and the terror of the wicked and the strengthening of the Christian Faith in

¹ Letter prefixed to the first Aldine edition of the *Epistole devotissime de Sancta Catharina da Siena*, Venice, 1500.

² *Spiritualium personarum femineæ sexus facta admiratione digna*, a tract of six leaves without pagination, with no date or printer’s name, but apparently printed in 1501 at Nuremberg, composed of letters of Ercole and others concerning Lucia Brocadelli. A woodcut frontispiece represents three nuns kneeling before the Crucifix.

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these tempests, He wondrously manifests Himself in many spiritual, pious and religious persons, especially of the feminine sex. Most seasonably doth He now stretch forth His hand, that man may rise again out of this ruin to sublime things, that all may know God more clearly and love Him more ardently, may imitate Him more diligently and become more blessed. Concerning which things the most illustrious and serene prince and lord, the Lord Hercules, Duke of Ferrara, beareth witness."

Ercole diligently collected information from all sources concerning the lives these women lived and the miracles they were said to have wrought. Three were especially famous. Colomba of Rieti lived in the convent of the Dominican nuns at Perugia, took no apparent nourishment, but was sustained (so the Duke said) by the Blessed Sacrament miraculously conveyed to her by the hands of an Angel; she had raised up a dead child to life, almost in the presence of Cesare Borgia, and preached repentance (not very effectually, we should say) to the fierce Baglioni. Osanna Andreassi, of Mantua, was an older woman than the others (she was born in 1449) and a stronger, more independent spirit; related on her mother's side to the Gonzaga, she was held in the utmost reverence by the rulers and people of Mantua, and frequently consulted by the Marquis and Isabella. She was in correspondence with many of the sovereigns of Italy, notably with the Duke of Urbino and Ercole himself. She had fed her soul upon the writings of St. Catherine and of Savonarola, but did not share the political theories of the latter; at the Battle of Fornovo all her sympathies had been with the army of the League, and she professed to know by revelation that the souls of almost all who fell fighting for the independence

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of Italy against the foreign invader were saved.¹ A mere girl compared to these two, but more immediately connected with Ferrara, was Lucia Brocadelli, of whom Ercole had probably heard in the first instance from his nephew, Niccolò Maria d' Este, the Bishop of Adria, who was in the papal service.

Lucia Brocadelli was born at Narni on the feast of Santa Lucia, December 13, 1476. Her father, who died when she was a child, was Treasurer of the Commune of Narni; one of his brothers was attached to the Papal Court, and became Datario to Alexander VI. Fantastic wonders are told of her childhood. St. Catherine herself watched over her cradle; Christ espoused her mystically; she danced with the Angels, practised strange austerities, took a vow of perpetual chastity. Then St. Catherine appeared again, taught her to read and write, bade her take the habit of the Dominicans. After her father's death, her uncles compelled her to marry a young Milanese gentleman, with whom she lived in virginity, until at the age of eighteen, in 1494, she

¹ Our chief authorities for the lives and work of these three women are: Leandro degli Alberti, *La Vita della Beata Colomba da Rieti* (Bologna, 1521); Fra Francesco da Ferrara, *La Vita della Beata Osanna da Mantova*, written immediately after her death, dedicated to Gian Francesco Gonzaga and Isabella (Italian translation, Mantua, 1590); Girolamo da Monte Oliveto, *Libretto della Vita et Transito della Beata Osanna da Mantova*, including her "spiritual colloquies" and her letters to the writer (second edition, Bologna, 1524); Giacomo Marcianese, *Narratione della Nascita, Vita e Morte della Beata Lucia da Narni* (Ferrara, 1616); Domenico Ponsi, *Vita della Beata Lucia* (Rome, 1711); and the more recent works and researches of L. A. Gandini, *Sulla venuta in Ferrara della Beata Suor Lucia da Narni*, and *Lucrezia Borgia nell' imminenza delle sue nozze con Alfonso d' Este*. I hope, on another occasion, to publish a separate study of the Beata Osanna.

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left him and took the habit of St. Dominic in her mother's house—to the fury of her husband, who is said to have attempted to burn down the convent where her confessor lived. The next year she went to Rome, to the monastery in which St. Catherine had died in the Via Santa Chiara, where a basrelief in the chapel (originally St. Catherine's cell) still records her presence. In January, 1496, the General of the Dominicans—that same Frate Giovacchino Turriani who, a little later, was compelled by the Pope to play the part of Savonarola's executioner—sent her to Viterbo, to direct a house of Dominican tertiaries there. There, on the night of February 24, the second Thursday in Lent, while between Suora Diambra, the Prioress, and Suora Leonarda (both of whom we shall meet again presently) in choir at Matins, she received the Stigmata. In spite of the agony they gave her, the wounds remained invisible until Passion Week, when they became visible and bled terribly. Her mother, Madonna Gentilina, and Fra Martino da Tivoli, her former confessor, were summoned to the convent, as the nuns believed she was dying.

Catholics and Protestants are nowadays agreed that the reception of the Stigmata is a question to be dealt with by the psychologist and the physician, rather than by the theologian and hagiologist. But it was naturally not so then. The matter seemed a new manifestation of the mystery of Christ's Passion. "These things," writes Ercole, "are shown by the Supreme Craftsman in the bodies of His servants to confirm and strengthen our Faith, and to remove the incredulity of impious men and hard of heart."¹ The Pope sent his physician, Berardo da Re-

¹ Letter of March 4, 1500, in the *Spiritualium personarum facta admiratione digna*, and in part published by Ponsi, *op. cit.*, pp. 205-207.

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canati, with a Franciscan bishop and the Dominican Master of the Sacred Palace, to investigate ; he received their report, even as he had personally touched the wounds of Colomba ; but these things impressed him no more than the mysterious warnings were to do in the year of Jubilee. A little later, the local Father Inquisitor subjected her to a prolonged examination, to which she simply answered : “ St. Catherine of Siena by her prayers has obtained from our Lord Jesus Christ that the Stigmata should be visible and palpable in me, as a pledge and testimony of the Stigmata of St. Catherine herself.”

Her life at Viterbo seemed to become a perpetual mystery.¹ Before the Crucifix and at Mass she had wonderful ecstasies, in which she cried, *Fuoco, fuoco, amore, amore !* Her face appeared like that of a seraph, while her body grew stiff and rigid as a statue. She talked with Christ and suffered His Passion, and revealed hidden things of celestial mysteries, such that the nuns could find no words in which to record them. All these things and many more were collected a little later at Ercole's request—he being “ beyond measure desirous to hear these things supermundane and well-nigh celestial ”—by his nephew, Niccolò Maria d' Este, who was then filling the office of governor of the Patrimony. “ I send them to your most illustrious Lordship,” writes Niccolò Maria, “ in order that, as you read so many miraculous actions, you may increase every day more the love and benevolence which you bear to the aforesaid Suora Lucia ; who seemeth to me worthy, not of

¹ Could she have been the nun in that town who saw the visionary apotheosis of Fra Girolamo and his fellow-martyrs ? In her legend there is no hint of anything like the column to which the Diarist refers (*Diario Ferrarese*, col. 353).

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this fragile and corruptible world of ours, but of the celestial and most blessed Hierarchies.”¹

Full of his desire to make Ferrara a kind of centre of religious life in Italy, Ercole in the summer of 1497—before his rupture with Savonarola—invited Lucia to his city, promising to build for her a convent of nuns of her own Order. Lucia accepted with alacrity; her mother, Gentilina, was profuse in her gratitude to the Duke for having “set such great love upon my own flesh and blood.”² But the nuns and the authorities of Viterbo flatly refused to let her go. One of her uncles, Antonio Mei, went to Viterbo to fetch her, on the pretext that her mother was dying; a nun overheard their conversation and raised the town upon him, with the result that the worthy man was arrested and sent about his business. Before he went, he arranged with the confessor, Fra Martino, that Lucia should continue every day to visit for her devotions the sanctuary of the Madonna della Quercia, outside Viterbo. But an attempt during the winter by Alessandro da Fiorano, captain of the Duke’s *balestrieri*, to carry her off on the occasion of one of these visits, failed. The people shut the gates in her face, and utterly refused to let her pass out to keep the appointment with Alessandro, of which they appear to have had some inkling from Fra Martino.

Throughout the greater part of 1498, the people of Viterbo and Ercole’s agents struggled together in the Papal Court for the possession of Lucia. The General of the Dominicans, who was naturally anxious to gratify so eminent and generous a benefactor of his Order, was entirely on

¹ Letter of March 5, 1503, from Viterbo. In Giacomo Marcianese, *Narratione*, pp. 104, 105.

² Gandini, *Sulla venuta in Ferrara della Beata Suor Lucia*, Letter 2.

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Ercole's side; Alessandro da Fiorano spent the Duke's money lavishly in all directions, and, although a man of action rather than a diplomatist, acquitted himself well. "I am not a chancellor nor an ambassador," he wrote to Ercole, "but I am a very faithful servant of your Excellence and desirous of doing always with all my work and industry the thing that you want, and especially in this business, since your most illustrious Lordship has given me to understand how much you have this thing at heart."¹ The Cardinal Ippolito and Monsignor Felino Sandeo used all their influence with the Pope to induce his Holiness to send briefs to Viterbo, threatening excommunications all round unless Lucia was sent to Rome. A certain Frate Timoteo da Modena, also a Dominican, pushed himself into the affair, presented himself to the General of the Order (without Ercole's permission or knowledge) as the Duke's emissary, and tried to work a little scheme of his own for carrying off Lucia from Viterbo and bringing her to Ferrara. With the permission of the Father Inquisitor of the city, the Duke gave the over-zealous friar a spell in the dungeons of the Castle for his trouble, until he was "mortificato e castigato molto" (as Monsignor Felino put it), and then expelled him from Ferrara.²

The whole thing, in fact, grew exceedingly unedifying. Ercole himself was perfectly sincere and simple-hearted in his devotion to one whom he believed to be especially favoured by God and to bear in her body the marks of Christ's Passion. Alessandro da Fiorano is obviously an honest fellow, bent on pleasing his master. But all the rest, with the exception of poor Lucia, evidently intend to make

¹ Gandini, *op. cit.*, Letter 9.

² Gandini, *op. cit.*, pp. 25, 27, 42.

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what they can for themselves out of the situation. Even Frate Martino, whose own conduct had been rather dubious, professed to be shocked at the sums of money that Lucia's uncle Antonio was demanding: "I fear," he said, "that, if Antonio makes merchandise of this holy thing, we shall lose the credit in Heaven and on earth."¹ The people of Viterbo hunted Antonio and Gentilina out of the place.

Lucia appears to have left the convent, and to be very lonely and miserable, longing for Ferrara as a place of rest and peace. "I have no consolation, neither of soul nor of body," she writes to her uncle, "and cannot stay any longer in this Hell. I pray you again to do all you can to take me away." And to Ercole himself she wrote, somewhat bitterly, complaining that they had taken her mother from her, and that it seemed more impossible than ever for her to get away from Viterbo. "My Lord and Father, I have no other hope on earth than your most illustrious Lordship. You ask me to pray for you. My Lord and Father, you know that I continually pray to that sweet Jesus that He may preserve you in this mortal world with health of soul and body."² Her sadness and perplexity were, perhaps, increased by the fact that Suora Colomba of Rieti—whom she venerated as a mother—had sent her confessor from Perugia to advise her not to go, but "to console with her presence that city in which she had received so manifest and excellent a gift."³ The uncle, Antonio, wrote to assure the Duke that Lucia had told him that she was longing to come and stay with his Lordship, "and she

¹ Gandini, *op. cit.*, Letter 48 (from Felino Sandeo to the Duke).

² Gandini, *op. cit.*, Letters 36 and 37.

³ So at least Ponsi, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

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told me that, when she had spoken with you, she would be the most contented religious that there was upon the earth.”¹

Finally, Monsignor Felino went secretly to Viterbo and bought the Podestà of the town, with the promise that, if the thing succeeded, the Duke would give him a far more lucrative and honourable position in Ferrara. Between them and Gentilina and the uncle, they arranged that on a certain day Lucia should be carried out of Viterbo on a mule, hidden in a basket of linen. On April 14, 1499, the plot succeeded, and Lucia was brought safely to her mother's house at Narni, whence Alessandro da Fiorano and an escort conducted her through the states of the Duke of Urbino to Ferrara. She arrived at Ferrara on May 7, with her mother Gentilina, a young cousin (Suora Orsola of the same Order, who died shortly after), and Fra Cristoforo da Viterbo, who had succeeded Fra Martino as her confessor.

Ercole himself came out to meet Lucia, and could not make enough of her. He declared that her goodness and the wonderful things that he found in her far exceeded the report, and wrote enthusiastic letters of thanks to every one concerned. Fra Timoteo turned up again, in the midst of all these rejoicings, very anxious and penitent, and bringing a letter from Monsignor Felino. “If he behaves himself like a good religious,” said the Duke, “he shall not lack favour from us.” Seeing that Lucia was still distressed and evidently uneasy in her conscience, Ercole, with almost womanly tact and consideration, wrote to the General of the Dominicans: “In order that Suora Lucia may stay here with her mind at rest and with greater content,

¹ Gandini, *op. cit.*, Letter 44.

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we pray your most reverend Lordship to be good enough to write her a kind letter to praise her for coming here, and to tell her that your Lordship is very pleased that she has come, and that she could not have done better. Such a letter will be a great comfort to her and a singular pleasure to us." He cordially invited Fra Martino to Ferrara, to take up his old duties of confessor to the Suora, and obtained from the General that he should be relieved of the office of prior of the convent at Foligno for this purpose. We may, in fact, hazard a guess that the ordinary clergy of the city would have found Lucia a terribly difficult penitent, for we find Ercole assuring the General that he is much edified by Fra Martino, and that "his coming was more than necessary."¹ There was nothing that the Duke would not have done for Lucia, to ensure her happiness under his protection, or for the Dominicans, to show his gratitude to them for having given this jewel of their Order into his hands. He had, indeed, fallen completely under their spiritual guidance.

"I congratulate your most illustrious Lordship much," wrote Fra Bonaventura da Como, one of the numerous members of the Order who seem to have had a share in the management of his conscience, "and I have the greatest pleasure that you have been given as confessor and spiritual father of your soul this venerable father Frate Giovanni da Tabia, a master in theology, a man most religious and of great perfection; the more your most excellent Lordship experiences his devotion and goodness together with the sufficiency of his learning, I am certain that your Lordship will be so much the more consoled thereat. Further, I rejoice greatly that the Divine Goodness hath sent thither

¹ Gandini, *op. cit.*, Letters 52, 53, 54, 60.

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to Ferrara that most devout handmaid of His, Suora Lucia, of whom I hear stupendous things. It would be a great happiness to me to be able to come so far to see this miraculous thing, and I assure your most illustrious Lordship that this is a great argument for our faith, because it is not possible by human means to preserve those wounds in the state in which they are. May the sweet Lord Jesus Christ ever be praised, Who has deigned for your very great consolation to lead thither this His humble spouse.”¹

Ercole lost no time. On June 2, 1499, less than a month after Lucia's arrival, he laid the first stone of the monastery he had promised to build for her. It was situated near the Dominican convent of the Angeli, more to the east of the Certosa, but not a stone of it remains to-day.² In the meanwhile, he found her a suitable house, in which she received a first band of young Ferrarese girls to train in the footsteps of St. Catherine—but, within a few days, the majority of them left, finding her rule too hard. We have some indications, indeed, that Lucia was lacking in the sweetness of disposition, in the lovable and winning nature that was so conspicuous in the character of her great Sienese prototype. But she believed herself in direct spiritual intercourse with her, and went unshaken on her way. One evening, as she watched the progress of the building, St. Catherine appeared to her and led her round the whole, blessing every room, the two singing together Savonarola's favourite hymn, *Ave maris Stella*; and Lucia imagined that, when the Saint left, she gave her a rod in token of command and government. Another time, she saw her hastening along a path paved with thorns, and call-

¹ Gandini, *op. cit.*, Letter 56 (dated Piacenza, July 3, 1499).

² See below, Chapter xii.

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ing her to follow. And yet again, the Madonna and Angels seemed to her ecstatic gaze to take possession of the place. In consequence of these visions, the convent was dedicated to St. Catherine, its church retaining the original title of the *Annunziata*.

Lucia communicated all these visions to Ercole, to whom they meant much. He passed hours in mystical conversation with her ; heaped favours of all kinds upon her. Not only did he diligently collect all the evidence of her past life, for the confusion of the incredulous, but he himself—shortly after her coming and while the building of the convent was in progress—wrote the long letter in her honour which has been already mentioned.

The letter is dated from Ferrara, March 4, 1500, and must be regarded as another of the strange fruits in which that amazing Jubilee of Pope Alexander was so prolific. After describing at length Lucia's condition, her sufferings from these wounds and her holy life, Ercole goes on to relate, "for the devotion of the faithful of Christ and the confirmation of the good," the things that he has heard from his messengers and witnesses concerning a certain Suora Steffana, a nun of the same Order in Crema, who has similar revelations and ecstasies, and who on Fridays endures the whole of the Passion in her body, stage by stage, from the Flagellation to the Deposition from the Cross. He then touches more slightly upon the miraculous communions of Suora Colomba at Perugia and the sanctity of Suora Osanna at Mantua : "And in this our city of Ferrara," he concludes, "there are many other nuns of the same Order, who are often rapt in ecstasy by the Divine Spirit and are redolent of sanctity ; as also we have heard of many in many other places in Italy, who, inspired by

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the God of Heaven, bear witness to us that this our Catholic Faith is true, and that the Holy Roman Church is the Mother of the Faith, and to be followed in all things that pertain to salvation and good morals.”¹ Clearly, it is a tacit protest against the corruption of the Curia, in the same spirit as the Venetian publisher’s letter dedicating the Epistles of St. Catherine to the Cardinal of Siena.

Pope Alexander took little heed of all this. Had Lucia or Colomba been possessed of Catherine’s literary gifts, and written letters touching him personally to the quick, or bidding him renounce the temporal power for the salvation of souls, it would have been another thing. Osanna, indeed, the only one of the group who appears to have been a really strong spirit, prophesied the downfall of Cesare Borgia and the speedy death of the Pope himself, and had such a fearful vision of the damnation of the latter and his Cardinals, *povere anime*, unless they changed their works, that she made the blood of her friends run cold with terror when she related it. But she kept very quiet at Mantua, and probably reserved these revelations for the sympathetic ears of such choice spirits as the Duchess Elisabetta of Urbino and her own spiritual son, Fra Girolamo of Monte Oliveto, who has recorded them for us.² As it was, Pope Alexander saw no danger in the movement.

¹ This letter is printed in full in the *Spiritualium personarum facta admiratione digna*, mutilated and abbreviated in Ponsi and elsewhere. Certain persons still refusing to credit his report, Ercole wrote another letter to the consuls of Nuremberg on January 23, 1501, in a similar strain, urging them to force those who had slandered Lucia to retract what they had said. It is printed with the former one in the tract quoted, as also by Giacomo Marcianese and Ponsi.

² *Libretto della Vita et Transito della Beata Osanna*, pp. 50v, 51, 97.

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The Duke had interested Isabella in his mystical desires, but did not succeed in inducing his favourite daughter either to go to Rome for the Jubilee or to bring Osanna to Ferrara. In a curious reply to a letter in which Ercole had exhorted her to make the journey to the Eternal City, Isabella pleads that she finds that it would cost her not less than a thousand or eight hundred ducats, doing it as cheaply as possible, and she is too heavily in debt to undertake it. His Excellence and God will, therefore, hold her excused, and the Pope is so generous with his indulgences that she hopes that, in the coming Lent, he will grant her the complete absolution through her ordinary confessor, whereby, adds the practical and economical Marchesana, "I shall gain the same merit with less expense"—

"If I had come, I would have done everything to bring the venerable Suora Osanna. I have talked with her about it, and she says that, to visit the venerable Suora Lucia and do a thing pleasing to your Excellence and to me, she would make every effort; albeit unwillingly, because several years ago she resolved and made a vow not to leave Mantua, it seeming to her (to use her own words) that she is such a mournful person that she ought not to go about. Nevertheless if I had come, in obedience to the summons of your Excellence, I should have persuaded her and brought her." ¹

"Oh how many things did she prophesy to me concerning Italy; and especially of the Duke Valentino! When he was in his greatest state and prosperity in the Marches, she said to me these very words: 'The lordship of the Duke Valentino is a fire of straw that soon passes; so will be his State; it will soon be dispersed, and the Pope shall remain short while upon the earth.'"

¹ Letter of November 27, 1500. Archivio di Modena, Cancelleria Ducale, *Lettere di Isabella d'Este Gonzaga*. A passage from this

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In the meanwhile, the new convent was rapidly approaching completion. "Since we have in great veneration the glorious St. Catherine of Siena," wrote Ercole on April 7, 1501, to the Cardinal of Modena, Giovanni Battista Ferrari, then filling the office of Datario at the Papal Court, "whom among all the Saints we hold for our special advocate, we have decided to dedicate and entitle to her a monastery which we are having newly built in this our city, not very far from the monastery of Santa Maria degli Angeli of the Friars Preachers of the Observance; and this monastery, with a certain endowment, we wish to consign to the venerable sisters of the third habit of St. Dominic, as to those who are the daughters and imitators of the said St. Catherine." Hearing that the authority of the Pope is necessary, he asks the Cardinal to consult with the vicar of the Order and arrange the matter with his Holiness. He explains that these sisters are to have the rules and privileges of the "cloistered" nuns of St. Dominic, but that, if "the venerable Suora Lucia da Narni, who is to be the guide and ruler of the said sisters and for whose sake we are so much the

letter is quoted by Bertoni, *op. cit.*, p. 207. For the full text, see Appendix II. of present work, document 22. Although Osanna never met Lucia, she refers to her once in her colloquies with Fra Girolamo of Monte Oliveto (concerning the wound in her side), and once incidentally in a letter to him (*Libretto della Vita et Transito della Beata Osanna*, pp. 78v, 122). On Whitsunday of this year, 1500, there had arrived in Ferrara "a live saintly nun, named Suora Colomba, of whom it was said that every day she received Communion from an Angel and that she lived on this Communion alone." The Duke lodged her in the house where Lucia was, until the monastery was ready (*Diario Ferrarese*, col. 387). This Colomba must have been an imitator and namesake of the more famous Colomba of Rieti, who certainly did not leave Perugia.

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more gladly having the said building built," wishes it to be so, they are to be allowed sometimes to go out of the convent, under certain conditions and restrictions, "in order to retain in some part the custom and way of their Mother, St. Catherine of Siena, who was of the same Order with this liberty."¹

The matter was soon settled. The Pope, by a Bull of May 29 of the same year, gave the Duke leave to do all that he wished, and conferred various privileges and an indefinite chief authority (even over the prioress) upon "our beloved daughter in Christ, Lucia da Narni, sister of the said third Order, who (as it is asserted) devotes herself as far as she can to following the footsteps of the Blessed Catherine."² On August 5, Lucia made her solemn entry into the new convent, and Ercole naturally made a great function of the event and formally consigned the keys to her charge. He heaped favours of all kinds upon her, great and small. The convent was richly endowed, and he exempted her from giving any account to the ducal Camera of what she received from him. We have curious records of painters set to work for her at his expense, of religious books given to her from the ducal library.³ He sought out rare relics of Dominican martyrs, to comfort her when she was ill. Her slightest wish to him was law. He ordered that peculiar honours and respect should be paid to her and to her confessors by all his subjects. The cloths in which her hands and feet were wrapped on the days upon

¹ Gandini, *Lucrezia Borgia*, Document 1.

² In Ponsi, *op. cit.*, pp. 227, 228.

³ Gandini, *op. cit.*, pp. 7, 8 ; Bertoni, *op. cit.*, pp. 206, 237. The Duke gave her from his library a Bible in the vernacular. For the pictorial decorations of her convent, see below, in Chapter xii.

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which the blood gushed out anew, Wednesdays and Fridays and all the feasts consecrated to the Passion, were to him sacred objects, endowed with rare healing powers.¹

Nevertheless, the new institution was not a complete success. Lucia was too young for the responsibility thrust upon her, and it was difficult to get women of the kind the Duke wanted to subject themselves to her rule. Her mother, Gentilina, had returned to her own home at Narni. Not content with transferring nuns from other convents in Ferrara, Ercole acceded to Lucia's ardent desire and decided to obtain a number of her former friends and associates from Umbria, to place them under her in Santa Caterina. This, however, was easier said than done.

In May, 1501, before the place was finished, Ercole sent Bartolommeo Bresciano, the messenger of the ducal chancellors, to Narni and Viterbo for the purpose. The mission was unsuccessful. At Narni, the fathers of Tomasa and Beatrice, two girls (cousins) whom Lucia particularly wanted to have, used *male parole*. "We should like to see," said they, "who will take away our daughters by force." They received Bresciano courteously enough, and let him talk with Beatrice for an hour. He reported to Ercole that she seemed *una santarella* and evidently loved Lucia cordially ; but, all the same, he could not get either her or her cousin to come. Lucia's relations, however, sent grateful messages to his Excellence, and offered him, at his need, fifty armed men at their own expenses ; Gentilina and two nuns with her would be most happy to come. At Viterbo the nuns wept together when they remembered

¹ Giacomo Marcianese, *passim*. She was said to have healed Don Alfonso in a dangerous illness by one of these cloths.

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the past, and Diambra, the Prioress, told Bresciano of many good works that Lucia had done ; but the Prior of the Dominicans absolutely refused to let him have the four nuns that he wanted. "It is quite enough for his Excellence," quoth this very reverend father, "to have robbed us of Suora Lucia, which hath been a great loss to this city of Viterbo." ¹

The convent being finished, Ercole returned to the charge. This time, however, "for our complete satisfaction and the perfect contentment of Suora Lucia," as his Excellence put it, at least eight women were required—two from Narni and six from Viterbo, including Diambra and Leonarda, the two who had been with Lucia at the moment of her reception of the Stigmata. Bartolommeo Bresciano was sent post-haste to Rome at the end of September, "in the name of God and with the aid of the glorious Saint Catherine of Siena," bearing a letter from Ercole to a lady remarkably unlike Saint Catherine, but in whose assistance he had reason to place unbounded confidence at that moment—Lucrezia Borgia.

¹ Gandini, *op. cit.*, Documents 2 and 3, being letters from Bartolommeo Bresciano to the Duke.

Chapter XI

THE COMING OF MADONNA LUCREZIA

THE Holy Year of Jubilee had nearly three months still to run, when Cesare Borgia, well supplied with money from the offerings of the pilgrims and from the sale of twelve elevations to the cardinalate at the September consistory, and backed by the consent of Venice, which the Pope had bought by his demonstration of crusading zeal against the Turk, took the field again against the petty tyrants of Romagna at the beginning of October. His own forces amounted to some seven hundred men-at-arms and six thousand infantry, with Paolo Orsini, Giampaolo Baglioni, Ercole di Sante Bentivoglio, and other condottieri, and he had a promise of a well-equipped body of French horse and foot under Allègre, which would bring his whole army up to some ten thousand men.

To this overwhelming force the luckless potentates of Romagna could offer no effectual resistance. Rimini surrendered as soon as Ercole Bentivoglio appeared before its walls in the name of Cesare, Pandolfo Malatesta escaping to Bologna. Giovanni Sforza, too, fled "the hydra's fiery breath," and, on the evening of October 27, the Borgia made his triumphal entry into Pesaro.

At the outset of this Borgian and Papal advance, Giovanni Bentivoglio saw his own rule in Bologna threatened,

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and had appealed to Duke Ercole for aid. The latter had written earnestly, to both Beltrando Costabili and Giovanni Valla, his resident orators in Milan and France respectively, urging them to point out to the King and his representatives that the royal interests in Italy would be seriously compromised, if Cesare Borgia or the Church got possession of Faenza, Rimini, and Pesaro, let alone Bologna. "If the Duke Valentino or the Church have these towns," Ercole writes to Costabili, "together with Forlì, Cesena, and Imola, they will be not less powerful in Italy than is the State of Milan, and, therefore, the most illustrious Lords Dukes of Milan have never consented that the Church should undo all the lords of those towns, nor that they should be given to one man; nay, they have done all they could to preserve each of those lords in his State; and to avail themselves the better of them, they have also taken them into their pay. So, in all the enterprises that they [the Dukes of Milan] have undertaken in Italy, they have made great use of the lords and cities of Romagna, since it is a convenient place and very handy for all the campaigns that are made in Italy; as was seen, for instance, in the war waged against the Florentines in the time of the magnificent Bartolommeo of Bergamo, and afterwards in the time of the most serene King Charles, and lastly when the Venetians wished to send succour to Pisa by the Val di Lamone. Therefore, not only should the Most Christian Majesty not suffer that Bologna should come into the hands of Duke Valentino, but he should not even permit him to acquire more than he already has in Romagna; besides that it would be very wrong that these lawful lords should be undone and hunted out of their homes, without any just cause." Let the ambassador, then, urge the royal lieutenants in his name

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not to suffer Bentivoglio to be molested, not only in consideration of the protection that the King has promised him, but also seeing that, as long as Bologna is in his hands, the King will be able to dispose of its resources as he chooses, which he certainly cannot do if it falls into the power of Cesare or the Pope. Let him not omit to make them realize that the writer's own interests will be seriously prejudiced if Cesare gets more in Romagna than he has, and especially in Bologna. He suggests that the King and his lieutenants should warn the Pope not to attend to wars in Italy at a time when Christendom is threatened by the Turk, and concludes by urging the utmost secrecy with respect to these communications of his. The letter to Valla is in nearly the same words.¹

The royal lieutenants in Milan made the most ample assurances and promises in favour of Bentivoglio; but no reply was forthcoming from France. "His Majesty," wrote Machiavelli to the Ten, "in the things that can arise in Italy, makes more account of the Pope than of any other Italian potentate." The King gave the Ferrarese and Bolognese envoys to understand that he would not interfere with the affairs of the Church, nor allow his Italian confederates to help the Romagnole despots. If the Pope actually attempted to do anything against the Bentivoglio, his Majesty would hear both sides of the question and condemn whichever was in the wrong.² Ercole was forced to dissemble.

¹ Archivio di Modena, *Minutario Cronologico*, *Minute Ducali* of October 5, 1500. See Appendix II., document 21.

² Letter from Ercole to Giovanni Bentivoglio, October 14, 1500 (Dallari, p. 193); Machiavelli's dispatch from Nantes, October 25, in his First Legation to the Court of France.

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As Cesare was entering Pesaro, Pandolfo Collenuccio arrived upon the scene—sent by the Duke of Ferrara to congratulate the conqueror, who had already written to inform him of his progress. Pandolfo did not succeed in getting an audience until the twenty-ninth; but then he found the Borgia most affable. “In substance,” writes Pandolfo to the Duke, “he told me that, knowing the prudence and goodness of your Lordship, he has always loved you and desired to have dealings with your Excellence; and that, when you were at Milan,¹ he wished to have done so; but that time and those affairs that were then in progress did not permit of it. And so, now that he has come into these parts, following up this desire of his, he wrote you that letter about his progress, as a beginning and demonstration of his mind and to show you that he is your son, holding for certain that your Lordship would be pleased thereat. And he is going to do the same also for the future, because he desires to have more intrinsic friendship with your Excellence, to whom he offered all his faculty and all that he could do, saying that in every need your Lordship should see the proofs. And he bade me commend him much to you, because he would have you as a brother. Also he thanked your Lordship for the reply that you had made him by letter, and for having sent a special messenger, but said that there was really no need; for that, even without this, he was quite certain that your Lordship would take keen pleasure in every good thing that befell him. In fine, he could not have used better nor more suitable words than he did, always speaking of you like a brother and himself as a son. And for my part, putting the affair and all his

¹ On the occasion of the triumphal entry of Louis XII.

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words together, I understand that he would be very glad to have more dealings with your Lordship and good friendship."

The interview lasted a good half hour, Cesare expressing great desire to be on friendly terms with Ferrara. They talked of Faenza, which he declared he would storm fiercely, if it did not do as the other cities had done. Not a word of Bologna. He was delighted to receive friendly messages from Alfonso and Ippolito, above all from the latter, of whom he spoke most affectionately. "They say," adds the envoy, "that the Pope is going to give this town as a dowry to Madonna Lucrezia, and to give her an Italian for husband who will always be a good friend of the Valentino. If it be true, I know not; so it is thought."¹

A little later, to his disgust and indignation, Ercole found that his own eldest son, Don Alfonso, was the person upon whom the Pope's choice had fallen.

Lucrezia Borgia was then in her twenty-first year, radiantly lovely and with a certain degree of cleverness, but destitute of the finer spirit that shines out in other women of that epoch, such as Isabella d' Este or Elisabetta Gonzaga. Hitherto, she had been simply a pawn in the great game her father and brother were playing. They had married her to Giovanni Sforza (in whose very palace the above recorded conversation had been held), when the star of the Sforza seemed in the ascendant; they had dissolved the marriage in December, 1497, when a different political combination seemed desirable, and had married her to the young Alfonso of Bisceglie, nephew of the King of Naples, in July, 1498. Alfonso's life had ended at Cesare's

¹ Letter from Pandolfo Collenuccio to Ercole of October 29, 1500. Gregorovius, document 25.

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bidding, barely two months before this new marriage was proposed, when the Aragonese alliance was no longer needed. In all these infamies Lucrezia had been to a certain extent passive. She had, on one occasion, saved Giovanni Sforza from Cesare's assassins; possibly, the oath that she declared herself ready to take, to have her marriage with him annulled, would not have been perjury. Hideous reports were spread by Giovanni Sforza and others whom Cesare had injured, concerning relations between her and other members of the Borgia family as the real motive for the divorce. They had been duly reported to Ercole by Antonio Costabili and Pandolfo Collenuccio; but, probably, were as little credited by him as by the serious student of history to-day. According to another scandal of the time, she had had a lover of plebeian origin in the interval between the dissolution of her first and the effectuation of her second marriage.¹ Be that as it may, Lucrezia had passionately loved her second husband (who had married her most unwillingly), and had borne him a son, Rodrigo. She had sincerely wept his untimely death, perhaps for a month, in her retirement at Nepi; but had returned, smiling and serene as ever, to Rome, looking, with her sweet innocent girl-like face, ready—over ready, in fact—to accept the new and greater fortune that was preparing for her.

¹ According to a dispatch from Bologna to the Marquis of Mantua, of March 2, 1498, a favourite papal *cameriere*, Pierotto, was imprisoned "per haver ingravidato la figliola de sua Santità, Madonna Lucretia" (Pastor, iii. p. 288, note 1). In Paolo Cappello's famous report to the Pregadi, it is stated that Cesare stabbed Pierotto to death with his own hands, while he clung to the Pope's mantle, so that his blood splashed over Alexander's face (Sanudo, *Diarii*, iii. col. 846). Pastor (iii. p. 429, note 3) regards this latter story as incredible.

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The Pope, in the meantime, was doing all that he could to isolate Ercole from his allies and make it impossible for him to escape out of his net. The latter had resolved not to get involved in the affairs of Faenza, where young Astorre Manfredi, loyally supported by his subjects, was holding out manfully against Cesare's overwhelming forces. Both in the Venetian Senate and in the French Court, the papal orators were intriguing against the Duke, attempting to make Venice and the King believe that Florence, Bologna, Mantua, and Ferrara were going to declare against France and for Maximilian, the Pope's idea being to restore Piero de' Medici to Florence, take Bologna for Cesare Borgia, and make Ferrara and Mantua completely subservient. "The design," wrote Machiavelli, "seemed to me to be worthy of the Holiness of our Lord"; and he spoke to the Cardinal of Rouen, pointing out that the Florentines could not possibly expect the Emperor to help them, seeing that he had done nothing for Milan that was his, and that neither Bologna nor Ferrara could have any hope in any one save the King, for protection from the Pope and Venice. Let his Majesty beware of those who were seeking the destruction of his friends, only to make themselves more potent and more easily to take Italy out of his hands. "The Majesty of the King," answered the Cardinal, "is very prudent, and has long ears and short belief; he hears everything, but only lends faith to what he finds by actual proof to be true."¹

When, in December, the French troops under Yves d' Allègre, whose uncle Aubigny was royal governor of

¹ Letter from Machiavelli at Tours to the Ten of Liberty and Peace, November 21, 1500, in his First Legation to the Court of France.

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Milan, passed through the districts of Modena and Reggio to aid Cesare Borgia in the conquest of Faenza, Ercole directed his ducal captains of those cities to provide them with lodgings and victuals at a just price, to pay all honour to Allègre, and to take care that the men-at-arms were well treated for their money, "taking precautions wisely among your other measures that they cannot say that the gates are shut against them, nor that they are mistrusted in any way."¹ Needless to say, the French repaid this confidence with brutality and outrage. Against one specially overbearing party, the people of Modena, "down to the priests," rose in arms. They killed six in the piazza and two more in San Domenico, closed the gates of the city and would have cut all the rest to pieces, if Count Gerardo Rangoni and the ducal *fattore*, Niccolò Sadoletto, had not come to the rescue and persuaded the indignant populace to let them go.²

Before the end of the year 1500, Alexander had formally proposed to Ercole that Lucrezia should be married to the hereditary prince of Ferrara, Don Alfonso; and, as early as November 26, the Venetian ambassador at Rome, Marino Gorzi, had informed his government that such a marriage was on foot.³ The idea was intensely repugnant to the House of Este; Ercole, who had hoped to make a great French match for his son, attempted to gain time by pleading that he was already negotiating a marriage elsewhere and could not draw back. In February, 1501, the papal insist-

¹ Archivio di Modena. *Minutario Cronologico*, December 21, 1500.

² *Diario Ferrarese*, coll. 393, 394. This was at the beginning of April, 1501.

³ Sanudo, *Diarii*, iii. col. 1130.

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ence was renewed. Hearing that the matter of Alfonso's projected marriage had been put by the Duke into the hands of the King of France, Alexander was sending another papal envoy to the latter sovereign to induce him to support his proposal. Ercole at once wrote to Bartolommeo de' Cavallieri, his ambassador at the French Court, to beg the King not to give way. "We trust that his Majesty will not write to us according to the desire of the Pope. We shall take it as a singular favour if he will represent that he has already quite decided for another marriage. Beseech him, in our name, with the greatest efficacy that you can, that at least he will not write to urge us to contract this affinity with the Pope, nor say that he leaves us free in the matter. Because, to speak freely with his Majesty, we shall never yield nor consent to give Madonna Lucrezia to Don Alfonso; nor could Don Alfonso himself be ever induced to take her."¹

But the Pope insisted. Cardinal Ferrari wrote from Rome to urge Ercole to consent, and the apostolic commissary from Cesare Borgia's army came in person to Ferrara. Dire consequences to the whole State of the Estensi were threatened, if they persisted in their refusal. The only hope that remained was to get the French marriage settled before the papal envoy arrived. Ercole instantly wrote to Cavallieri, telling him that he remembered two ladies who had been suggested as suitable brides, the daughter of the Comte de Foix and Madame d'Angou-

¹ *Minute di dispacci per Francia a Bartolommeo de' Cavallieri*, February 14, 1501. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio degli Ambasciatori — Francia*. The opening words of the dispatch, "già son più mesi," show clearly that Gregorovius is mistaken in supposing that the negotiations began with Cardinal Ferrari's letter of February 18.

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lême. Let him try to get the first from the King and the Cardinal of Rouen ; but if “ quella de Foys ” cannot be had, “ you will give us information clearly as to the qualities of Madame d’Angoulême, in such wise that we may understand well about her age, and if she has been married again or not, and in what degree of affinity she stands conjoint with the Most Christian Majesty ; because, when we have learned all, we shall then answer you as to whether we think that you should open any negotiations about her. We should also much like you to inform us of the qualities of the Foix lady and her age, and the beauty of both of them, and also the dowry of each, if you can find it out.” And, the same day, he sent him another letter, bidding him instantly inform the King of the coming of the apostolic commissary and of the papal threats, and beseech him, if he is urged by the Pope in this matter, to tell him that he has already engaged Don Alfonso, and cannot therefore set the Duke at liberty ; “ or whatever will seem best to his Majesty, provided that he relieves us from this persecution of the Pope, and that he delivers us from his hatred, the which without doubt we should incur very greatly, if we repulsed his overtures although we were at liberty to satisfy him, and every day would he attempt something against us. This we have to consider and estimate very much ; but the Most Christian King need reckon little if he does not gratify the Pope in this, since the Pope has more need of him than he of the Pope.” ¹

The Duke, however, had reckoned without his host. Louis was counting upon the Pope’s support in his designs

¹ *Minute di dispacci per Francia a Bartolommeo de’ Cavallieri*, February 25 (two dispatches of same date), 1501. Archivio di Modena, *loc. cit*

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upon Naples, and had no intention of offending him for the sake of a mere feudatory of the Church. Cardinal Ferrari in the Pope's name represented to Ercole the advantages of this union, and the enmity of the Pope and Cesare, perhaps also of France, if he refused ; and Alexander already flattered himself that the day was won.¹ On May 26, Bartolommeo de' Cavallieri wrote from Châlons that, on the previous evening, the Cardinal of Rouen had told him that the Pope had sent one of his secretaries to ask the King to write and urge Ercole to consent to the marriage, and that the King, "having at present need of the Pope," had been unable not to write about it to the Duke. Bartolommeo saw the King that morning. His Majesty professed himself favourable to the marriage of Alfonso and the daughter of the Comte de Foix, but said that the Pope had pressed him to write to Ercole in support of the Borgia marriage, "and that already he had written to your Excellence, who was prudent and wise, and who would not, because of his letter, do anything save what you thought fit, adding that his intention is, in case this negotiation does not proceed, to give him the Foix lady."² Thus the responsibility for further resistance was thrown upon Ercole's own shoulders.

The Duke, who had continually answered the importunity of the Pope by pleading that he could not enter into the question, because he had entirely resigned his liberty in this matter to King Louis, was aghast, and saw his game played out. "Where we believed and held for certain," he wrote back, "that we were delivered and liberated from this business by the authority of the Most Christian Majesty,

¹ Gregorovius, p. 160.

² *Dispacci da Francia di Bartolommeo de' Cavallieri*. Archivio di Modena, *loc. cit.*

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we see ourselves entangled in it more than ever, by his means and his work. Wherefore, we cannot refrain from remonstrating with his Majesty concerning this thing. We trusted in the words and promise of his Majesty, who in writing to us affirmed that he would never write to us about this matter and that he would make an opportune reply to the Pope. And we, trusting in the grace and wisdom of his Majesty, felt quite certain of this thing; and we replied continually to the Pope's importunity that we could not enter into this business with him, because we had given up our faculty and liberty to the Most Christian Majesty; which we should not have said, nor written, if we could have imagined that the said Majesty would have changed, and consented to have such a letter written to us as he has done. This seems to us so much the more grievous, as his Majesty with one tiny little word could satisfy the Pope, by giving him to understand that already there had been so much spoken of the other marriage, and that his faith had been given to such an extent, that he could not change it nor intervene in favour of this affinity with the Pontiff. Nor should it be taken into consideration that his Majesty at present has need of the Pope, as the most illustrious and reverend Monsignor of Rouen has said to you; for the Pope has much greater need of his Majesty, without whose favour he could not stay in Rome nor in Italy. And if the Most Christian King had used those terms with the Pope that perhaps would have been not unfitting but universally commended, he could have much more securely disposed of this, or of another better Pontiff, than he can at present. But we cannot do so; we must needs temporise, and avoid all occasions of angering the mind of the Pope, and especially at present, since we have seen that the Most Christian

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Majesty, because he has some small need of the Pope, grants him what he wants, paying no heed to our concerns and needs. And if, perchance, his Majesty deemed that we were of such great cleverness and prudence as to know how to get out of this difficulty (and this may be the cause that has induced him to write to us!), you can assure him that we were never so industrious nor so wise that we should know how to vary or contradict what we have said and written. Since, therefore, we have always affirmed to the messengers of the Pope that this affair of ours was in the hands of the Most Christian King (trusting in him, as we said above), and now his Majesty writes to us according to the Pope's desire, we are reduced to so great perplexity that we do not know what line of conduct to adopt. For, in the first place, we are resolved never to contract this relationship with the Pontiff. It does not appear to us advisable to tell him absolutely that we will not; because such a repulse would make him an even bitterer enemy to us than he is now. Neither will we say that the Most Christian Majesty does not wish it, albeit he writes to us in another tone in order not to offend him. He, therefore, can judge right well the great difficulty to which we are reduced; from which we see no way of escape, save by the means and aid of his Most Christian Majesty."¹

But these were mere words, and Ercole soon found that further resistance was useless. The Pope threatened him with the loss of his duchy unless he consented, and, although the King told Cavallieri that Ferrara was under his special protection and could only fall if France fell, the

¹ Original letter of June 9, 1501. *Istruzione a Bartolommeo de' Cavallieri*. Archivio di Modena, *loc. cit.*

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French ministers urged the Duke to yield on advantageous conditions for Ferrara and the House of Este. The Cardinal of Rouen sent the Archbishop of Narbonne to Ferrara to counsel compliance.¹ Ercole gave way with some dignity, declaring that he was postponing his own will and the dignity of his House for the desires and interests of the King of France. He was ready, he told the envoys of Alexander and Cesare, to do what the King and Cardinal desired, provided that a satisfactory agreement could be made about the details and conditions. To the Cardinal of Rouen himself he wrote: "Having postponed the honesty of my most ancient House, I have decided to yield."²

So pleased was the Sovereign Pontiff at Ercole's surrender, that he promptly took a holiday, leaving Lucrezia in the Vatican as regent of the Papal States. He was not so pleased a little later, when he heard of the conditions upon which Ercole insisted. These included 200,000 ducats as Lucrezia's dowry, liberation from the annual tribute that was paid to the Holy See, the concession to himself of the right of patronage of the bishopric of Ferrara, the cession to Ferrara of Cento and La Pieve (small towns included in the archbishopric of Bologna, and therefore a part of the Papal States), and a number of benefices for members of the House of Este. Alexander offered half the dowry demanded. The French King advised Ercole, if the thing had to be done, to get the biggest profit out of it that he could; in case it fell through, he was still ready to find a French bride for Alfonso.³ But he thought that the ducal demands

¹ Gregorovius, pp. 169, 170.

² *Minute Ducali* of July 8, 1501, to Giovanni Valla and the Cardinal of Rouen. Archivio di Modena, *Minutario Cronologico*.

³ Gregorovius, pp. 172, 173.

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were excessive. Ercole indignantly protested that he was only asking what was reasonable, "in such wise that it can be understood that we make more account of honour than of money." If there should be any further delay, he assured the King, or any rupture in the negotiations, it would proceed entirely from the Pope. He wrote to Cesare Borgia that he had agreed to this marriage, "because of the reverence which we bear to the Holiness of our Lord, and the excellent qualities of the most illustrious Madonna Lucrezia ; but much more because of the love and affection which we bear towards your Excellence."¹ Cesare and Lucrezia—the latter being the one person most bent upon the marriage, and showing her wishes without the slightest delicacy—persuaded the Pope to give the Duke what he wanted. Venice disliked the affair, as tending to increase Cesare's power in Italy. The King of the Romans urged Ercole not to make this alliance. But the ill-humour of the one Power and the interference of the other merely strengthened the Duke's hands. On September 1, 1501, the marriage was contracted *per verba* in the palace of Belfiore, the Pope having previously conferred on the Cardinal Ippolito the dignity of Archpriest of San Pietro.² The Duke wrote to Lucrezia on the same day :—

"Most illustrious and noble lady, our daughter-in-law and dearest daughter. Your Ladyship will hear from Messer Guglielmo, Archdeacon of Châlons, the present bearer, how to-day by the Divine grace the marriage has been contracted *per verba de presenti* between yourself, by means of your

¹ *Minute* to Bartolommeo de' Cavallieri and the Most Christian King, of August 11, to "the Duke of Romagna" [i.e. Cesare Borgia], of August 6. Archivio di Modena, *Minutario Cronologico*.

² Gregorovius, pp. 174, 175.

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two procurators, and the most illustrious Don Alfonso, our first-begotten. To us this thing has been a supreme satisfaction and very great consolation in our old age. We rejoice thereat with your Ladyship, whom we first loved in no ordinary wise because of your own singular virtues, our reverence for the Holiness of our Lord, and because you are the sister of the most illustrious Duke of Romagna, whom we hold as our honoured brother. Now we love you intimately more than a daughter, hoping that from you will result the conservation of our posterity; and we shall endeavour to have you near us as soon as possible, according to our desire.”¹

But in his communication the next day to the Marquis of Mantua, to his ambassadors in France, Venice and Florence, and to Bentivoglio, he simply stated that he had yielded to the exhortations of the Most Christian King, now that the Pope had agreed to his conditions. Indeed, he originally intended to say that he “had condescended” to arrange this relationship with the Pope, but thought better of it, and altered the word to “consented” before the dispatch was sent.²

There were wild rejoicings in the Papal Court at the news that the fish had at last been brought to land. The Vatican was illuminated; cannons thundered from Sant’ Angelo. Lucrezia could not contain herself for delight. She went through Rome in state to give thanks in Santa Maria del Popolo, and her Spanish buffoon danced through the streets, cheering for “the most illustrious Duchess of Ferrara.” The Pope, losing what little dignity he had left to him,

¹ *Minute Ducali* of September 1, 1501. Archivio di Modena, *Minutario Cronologico*.

² *Minute Ducali* of September 2. *Ibid.*

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assembled the Cardinals in consistory, and harangued them about the virtues and prudence of Duke Ercole, the excellent qualities of Don Alfonso, the ancestral glories of the House of Este.

On September 15 two Ferrarese envoys, Gerardo Saraceni and Ettore Berlinghieri, arrived in Rome. Their object was to secure the papal Bulls required, before their master committed himself further—Bartolommeo de' Cavallieri having warned him not to trust the Pope further than was necessary. Lucrezia received them enthusiastically, and showed herself the most zealous supporter of the Ferrarese claims. "She already seems to us an excellent Ferrarese," wrote the ambassadors. Festivities fast and furious followed in the Vatican, some of them far exceeding the bounds of propriety.¹ Lucrezia danced night after night, to the huge edification of his Holiness and the admiration of the Ferrarese envoys, until she made herself quite ill. A few little complications remained. One was the personage whom the unsophisticated reader of these events might have imagined to be the bride's lawful husband, Giovanni Sforza of Pesaro, who was supposed to be lurking in Mantua. The Pope made the ambassadors write to Ercole that the unlucky man must be kept out of the way, and not allowed to come to Ferrara at the time of the wedding. Another was the little boy, Rodrigo, her son by Sforza's even more unfortunate successor; but Lucrezia assured Gerardo Saraceni that he would stay in Rome and that ample provision would be made for him. "Rome seems to me a prison," said the gay young lady, and she urged the Pope to do everything that Ercole wanted.² She had already

¹ Cf. below, p. 402, note 2.

² The Bull, reinvesting Ercole and Alfonso and their descendants

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begun an affectionate and confidential correspondence with her prospective father-in-law. The envoys assured him that she had nearly fainted when she heard that he was ill, and had expressed her ardent wish that she could have come to Ferrara to heal him with her own hands, as she had done the Pope on a similar occasion.¹ With his usual anxiety that the dramatic and spectacular entertainments in the coming celebrations should be worthy of his reputation, Ercole wanted to hear all about the mighty deeds of the ancestors of the Borgias in past ages, in order that they might be worked up for artistic purposes. But his ambassadors found it difficult to satisfy him. "Up to now," they wrote, "it is only of Calixtus that something worthy is found, especially his own achievements, of which Platina writes much. For the rest, it is generally known what this Pope has done, so that whoso has to make the oration will have a wide field open before him."² This was perfectly true, though not quite in the sense in which the writers ostensibly meant it.

Don Alfonso still maintained a sullen silence. The Emperor Maximilian continued to abuse the Pope and to blame the marriage, urging the Duke to draw back before it was too late. Ercole promptly informed the Pope of this "evil disposition" of the King of the Romans, and had his letters read to the papal orators at Ferrara. "Although as far as it concerns us," he wrote to his ambassadors

with the Dukedom of Ferrara, is dated September 17, 1501 (Theiner, iii. pp. 511-513). The tribute is reduced to one hundred golden florins annually, or, in case of the direct issue of Alfonso and Lucrezia failing, to one thousand.

¹ Gregorovius, p. 190.

² Dispatch of October 18. Gregorovius, pp. 192, 193.

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in Rome, "we do not make much account of this opinion of his Majesty, since we have done what we have with reason and feel every day greater satisfaction of soul thereat ; nevertheless, because of the tie that binds us to his Holiness, and in order that with his wisdom he may be able to judge of this demonstration for his other needs and affairs, we have thought that we ought to inform him of what we hear. We are persuaded that, with his prudence, he will examine and judge right well how far this evil disposition of the said Majesty can matter to him."¹ The imperial opposition was for Ercole simply an excellent instrument with which to reduce his Holiness to docility. Alexander was profuse in his panegyrics of Lucrezia, her beauty, her graciousness and prudence. Cesare, who was now in Rome (Faenza had capitulated in April, and the partition of the Neapolitan Kingdom between France and Spain had been practically effected in July), also approved, but was "not at home" to the Ferrarese ambassadors—a thing which the Pope declared grieved him to the very heart.² There were still some weeks of negotiation and haggling ; Ercole would not send to fetch the bride until he got his Bulls and her dowry paid down in hard cash, but professed himself insulted when Alexander said that he was acting like a merchant. Lucrezia continued to urge the Pope to yield in every particular, while Maximilian put all the pressure he could upon the Duke to delay. But, on November 14, Ercole wrote to the Marchesana Isabella (who had been the most emphatic of all the family against Lucrezia when it had been first proposed), that he had decided to send the

¹ Letter of October 23, 1501, to Saraceni and Berlinghieri. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio degli Ambasciatori—Roma*.

² Dispatch of Saraceni, October 26. Gregorovius, p. 191.



Portrait of Saint Catherine of Alexandria.

Saint Catherine of Alexandria.

(a supposed portrait of Lucrezia Borgia)

By Pintoricchio

Kenneth Clark

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company to Rome to fetch Lucrezia at the beginning of December, and that the marriage would be celebrated as soon as she arrived in Ferrara :—

“ Since you are our daughter, it is proper that you should be present at this wedding, and so we exhort you to come. And we are certain that the most illustrious Lord Marquis, your consort and our most beloved brother, will be most pleased at your coming hither, as he is always desirous to do whatever pleases us. And although we should not be less desirous that his Lordship also should be present at it, nevertheless, for every sufficient reason, it seems to us better that he should not come, taking into account the condition of the present times—all of which we believe that his Lordship, too, in his prudence right well considers and knows. And so your Ladyship can give him to understand.”¹

At the same time, a very different transaction was in progress between Ercole and Lucrezia. He had interested his Borgia daughter-in-law in his mystical aspirations, and especially in his cult of St. Catherine of Siena. As we saw, he had sent Bartolommeo Bresciano to Rome, to induce her to use her influence with the Pope to get the nuns that Lucia wanted sent from Viterbo and Narni to the new convent of Ferrara. “ We desire greatly,” he wrote to Lucrezia, “ that an excellent beginning should be given to that monastery with these nuns, who are full of supreme goodness and charity. It will be easy for your Ladyship to obtain that we have what we desire, and you will give us as great a pleasure as you could possibly give us by any other action that at present we could expect from you. As soon as we thought of using the means and favour of your Ladyship in this, we thought that we had gained our object.

¹ Archivio di Modena, *Minutario Cronologico*.

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And let not your Ladyship wonder at this solicitation of ours, because, since we are in the state that we are, we attend more to affairs of the soul (like this is) than to other matters, and the affairs of the soul should be embraced with all possible fervour and efficacy.”¹

With this letter, Bresciano reached Rome on the evening of October 11, not without running considerable risk on the way from bands of French and Gascon soldiers who were marching from Lombardy to join the royal forces in the newly conquered Neapolitan provinces. He was delighted at his reception by Lucrezia, who promised to do all that the Duke wanted and induced the Pope to send messengers to the governors of Viterbo and Narni with papal briefs and letters from the General of the Dominicans, threatening the nuns with excommunication unless they came to Rome within six days. “So I live in hopes,” wrote Bresciano to Ercole, “that her Ladyship will bring them with her to Ferrara, to make a desired present of them to your Excellence and to the venerable Suora Lucia; and I shall not abandon the undertaking, as your Lordship has committed it to me, but shall keep continually near this most illustrious Madonna until we are brought to Ferrara. Verily, this lady has taken up this thing with all her powers to get your Lordship gratified, and I find her Ladyship so well disposed towards you that she could not be more. I hope that your Excellence will be right well satisfied with this most illustrious Madonna, for she is endowed with so much graciousness and goodness that she continually thinks of nothing else, save how to serve you.”²

¹ Letter dated Comacchio, September 28, 1501. Gandini, *Lucrezia Borgia*, document 6.

² Dispatch of October 31. Gandini, *op. cit.*, document 14. This

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Early in November, Suora Diambra and Suora Leonarda came to Rome, accompanied by our old friend, the redoubtable Fra Martino. Their appeals to the General of the Dominicans and to the Pope himself were of no avail. His Holiness, without further words, told them that they were sent to Ferrara. Lucrezia was more kind, but equally firm, and told them plainly that, unless they produced those other nuns that Ercole and Lucia wanted, she would herself send and fetch them on her own account. All sorts of excuses were now trumped up by these pious dames. "For my part," said Leonarda, "I cannot come, because I have my old mother who is infirm. If only my brother were alive, I could say that I would come, but never will I abandon my mother." "You must obey the commands of the Pope," answered Bresciano severely. Then Diambra the prioress, whom Bresciano had previously noted as a woman of few words, suddenly gave tongue. "Suora Beatrice," she said, "is so lame that she cannot move without two crutches. As to Suora Felicità, we shall never give her to Suora Lucia, because she has the dropsy so badly that it would not do to put her with the other sisters. Her family will never let Suora Appolonia come to Ferrara. Let us go home, and we shall choose four nuns so good and sufficient that the venerable Suora Lucia will be contented and well satisfied."¹

last day of October, 1501, is the date of the notorious supper said by Johannes Burchardus (*Diarium*, ed. Thuasne, iii. p. 167) to have been given by Cesare in his apartment in the Vatican to fifty harlots—the Pope and Lucrezia being present—and followed by an orgie of the most obscene description. For a discussion of this unpleasant topic, see Pastor, iii. p. 452, note 1. It seems quite incredible, in the face of the laudatory epistles about Lucrezia's goodness and virtues that the Ferrarese agents were sending at this very time to the Duke.

¹ Bresciano's dispatches of November 12 and 18, 1501. Gandini, *op.*

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Ercole, however, persisted that he must have the women Lucia wanted; *seven* from Viterbo, two from Narni, and two other young girls who were not nuns. He professed himself certain that Lucrezia would see the thing through. He declined to believe in Beatrice's lameness or in Felicità's dropsy (though he was ready to dispense with Leonarda herself, if necessary), and suggested that Lucrezia should tell the Governor of Viterbo to speak with them. In the presence of Fra Martino and Bresciano, the Pope's daughter gave a thorough scolding to Diambra and Leonarda, whom she found "more obstinate than the devil," as Bresciano put it. The heads of the Dominican Order, understanding that Lucrezia had taken the matter in hand and that the nuns would be properly looked after until they got to Ferrara, made them give way. Bresciano went to Viterbo, with a commissary of the Pope, and brought the nuns wanted safely to Rome on December 21, the contingent from Narni coming in a few days later. The original idea had been for Lucrezia to bring them with her to Ferrara; but this being obviously unsuitable, Ercole decided that his sacred prize—which was regarded as a present to him and Lucia from Lucrezia—should set out a day or two in advance of the bridal party, Lucrezia herself taking care that they were properly housed and provided for on the way with all possible comfort in the cold winter weather. Hearing that there were a number of relations of the nuns who wanted to

cit., documents 18 and 19. In the latter document I have corrected an evident error in the text. Gandini (pp. 15, 42) reads "*Se sore Biatrice la priora dice essere siancata*"; but it should obviously be "*De sore Biatrice la priora dice*," the speaker being the prioress Diambra, as is quite clear from the context and from Ercole's answer (document 21).

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come to Ferrara with them, Ercole professed himself well pleased : “ Let all come who want to come, and caress them and use every kindness towards them,” he wrote to Bresciano, “ because also by us they will be well received and caressed.”¹ At the last, Suora Beatrice began to make fresh difficulties, but was apparently overcome by Bresciano hinting that, with her spirit and cleverness, she would certainly be one of those who would govern the monastery. Right glad was the worthy fellow when, on the last day of the year, he mustered his troublesome flock and found that not one of those his master wanted was missing. “ My lord,” he wrote, “ I never knew what labour was until I had to make so many heads agree. I thank our Lord God who has got me through it with credit, but there was a time when I doubted.”²

In the meanwhile, the splendid cortège of princes and nobles of Ferrara had come to Rome to fetch Don Alfonso's bride. All the noblest families in the Estensian duchies were represented. The Cardinal Ippolito was the presiding genius ; with him were his brothers Ferrando and the younger Sigismondo, his cousin the younger Ercole, Niccolò Maria and Meliaduse d' Este (bastards of the House, and bishops respectively of Adria and Comacchio), Niccolò da Correggio and Federigo della Mirandola, representatives of the Pio, Rangoni, Strozzi and the like ; as special ducal ambassadors came Gian Luca Pozzi of Pontremoli and Gerardo Saraceni, as before, while a number of ecclesiastics and religious were headed by Maestro Zanetto, the Inquisitor of San Domenico.³ With them rode young Annibale Bentivoglio, whose presence

¹ Gandini, *op. cit.*, document 28.

² Dispatch of December 31. Gandini, *op. cit.*, document 30.

³ The whole list is given by Zambotto in his *Silva Cronicarum*, and in the *Diario Ferrarese*.

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in Rome, according to the hopes of his father and Ercole, would augment the good dispositions of the Pope towards the Lords of Bologna.¹ The whole cavalcade consisted of more than five hundred persons, superbly mounted and gorgeously arrayed, preceded by pipers and trumpeters ; but the weather was fearful and the journey, in the utmost discomfort, took thirteen days.

On the morning of December 23, they made their state approach to the Eternal City. There were the usual receptions at intervals along the way. At the Ponte Milvio, the Senator of Rome and other civic dignitaries met them with two thousand men ; further on, they were greeted by Cesare Borgia and the French ambassador, with the Swiss guard. It was nearly evening when they reached the Porta del Popolo, where nineteen Cardinals awaited them ; a united procession was formed, Romans and Ferrarese together passing in triumph through the streets towards the Vatican, while the cannons of Sant' Angelo thundered out their welcome. After a most cordial reception by the Pope, Cesare brought the Princes of Este to be introduced to his sister. Lucrezia appeared in a wonderful costume of white and gold, with a green headdress, all studded with the famous pearls that she so loved. It was noticed that Cardinal Ippolito's eyes flashed when he saw her, and the others were equally delighted. The same evening Messer Gian Luca went with Saraceni to interview her, on behalf of Ercole and Alfonso, and sent the former a glowing account of her beauty and her piety—upon the latter point, seeing that she had promised him the reversion of the bishopric of Reggio, he was surely a competent judge. Nevertheless, the tone of his dispatch shows that apprehensions had still

¹ Cf. letters in Dallari, pp. 205, 206.

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been entertained at the Ferrarese Court. "Altogether," he wrote, "she seems to me of so excellent a condition that there is no need or possibility of fearing anything sinister from her, but we may rather presume, believe and hope always the best conduct."¹

By a decree of the Pope, the carnival now began, and for more than a week Rome was the scene of the wildest festivities. Lucrezia gave balls in her own palace, at which she danced specially with Don Ferrando, "gentilmente e con grazia singolare," while the Ferrarese and Mantuan guests eyed her damsels and judged that, with a few exceptions, they could show fairer at home. The public ways swarmed with masked courtesans. The Cardinal and Ferrando went with Cesare masked through the streets, while all Rome seemed rejoicing, though—as we learn from "El Prete," a dependant of Niccolò da Correggio and correspondent of the Marchesana Isabella—*brutti giochi* were played after dark.² On the evening of December 30, Lucrezia, in a magnificent costume of crimson and gold brocade, blazing, as usual, with pearls, emeralds and rubies, with a long retinue of cavaliers and ladies, was escorted in state by Ferrando and Sigismondo to the Vatican. In the Sala Paolina the Pope sat enthroned with the Cardinals and Cesare, the ambassadors of France, Spain and Venice being present. Here the marriage by proxy was celebrated; Ferrando gave the bride the ring in the name of his brother, the Cardinal Ippolito presenting her with a superb casket of jewels, of the value of 70,000 ducats, the gift of Duke Ercole to his daughter-in-law. Races and a sham fight were exhibited in the Piazza beneath the windows, after which Lucrezia's damsels danced

¹ Dispatch of December 23, 1501. Gregorovius, document 31.

² Gregorovius, pp. 204, 205.

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for an hour before the Pope, she and Cesare opening the ball. Alexander was nearly crazy with delight and fondness, and laughed continually. Then there were comedies played, with allegorical pastorals, upon the conclusion of which the gathering broke up, leaving the Borgias and Estensian princes together to sup quietly with the Pope.¹

But the Duke of Ferrara by no means trusted either Alexander or his daughter completely. He had given Messer Gian Luca minute directions, before he left Ferrara and by letter since, as to the way in which Ippolito was to present the jewels to Lucrezia, and he charged the Cardinal strictly not to deviate in the slightest degree from these instructions, "in order that, in case the Duchess should fail in her duty towards the most illustrious Don Alfonso, we may not be more obliged than we wish to be, concerning these jewels." He was not to make an unconditional present of them to her, and there was to be no mention of them in the notary's instrument.² The ambassadors, in a similar spirit, declined to give the papal authorities a receipt for the dowry, until every penny of it had been paid, and Ercole warmly commended their prudent conduct.³ They had previously assured him that Lucrezia had told the Pope himself that she would never give his Holiness cause to blush for her conduct, and of this, "so far as we can judge," they declared themselves convinced, being much edified by her bearing and the life of her household.⁴

¹ Gregorovius, pp. 205-207.

² Gregorovius, p. 206 ; *Minute Ducali* to Cardinal Ippolito, December 21, 1501. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*.

³ *Minute Ducali* to Pozzi and Saraceni, December 31. Archivio di Modena, *Minutario Cronologico*.

⁴ Dispatch of December 28. Gregorovius, p. 213.

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The festivities reached their height on the first two days of the new year, 1502. On January 1, there was a great pageant in the Piazza San Pietro, given by the Roman municipality. Thirteen triumphal chariots, accompanied by a thousand men on horse and foot, with music and preceded by the banner of the City, came from the Piazza Navona to the Vatican and moved round the square, setting forth the triumphs of Hercules and of Caesar and the heroes of ancient Rome, while the Pope and his guests looked on from the windows. Then, in the Vatican, there were comedies and morris-dances; shepherds recited the praises of Lucrezia, who sat at the Pope's right hand, surrounded by the Cardinals. A buffoon danced before the Pope, dressed as a woman, the courtiers joining in, masked, with Cesare himself conspicuous among them by his splendid attire and noble figure. To the sound of trumpets, a tree appeared, out of which came a child who sang verses and threw cords of silk to the merry-makers, who whirled round it as they danced. Finally, at the Pope's command, Lucrezia descended from her throne and led out another dance with one of her Spanish ladies.

The next day opened with a great bull-fight in front of San Pietro, in which Cesare took part and killed the most furious bull with his lance. In the evening there was a dramatic representation in the Pope's chamber, the whole being designed to glorify the new alliance between Este and Borgia. Virtue and Fortune strove together for precedence, until Glory appeared upon a triumphal car with the world beneath her feet, declaring that Caesar and Hercules had overcome fortune by virtue, relating the deeds of the Duke of Romagna. Hercules followed and fought with Fortune, whom he took and bound, releasing her only on Juno's

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promise that neither would ever do anything against the Houses of Este and Borgia, but would favour this new relationship. Afterwards came Rome, on a triumphal chariot, and bewailed that Alexander, who held the place of Jove, should deprive her of Lucrezia, who was the refuge of all Rome. Ferrara followed, without a triumphal chariot, declaring that Madonna was going to no unworthy place, and that Rome was not losing her. Then appeared Mercury, sent to establish concord between the two cities, announcing that it was the will of the Gods that Madonna Lucrezia should go to Ferrara, and he made Ferrara ascend upon a triumphal chariot and pass in honour across the stage. This being concluded, the *Menaechmi* of Plautus was played, and, in the scene where one of the twins is seized by order of his father-in-law, the actor cried out that he marvelled that they dared to use such violence to him, when Caesar and Hercules were on his side, and Jove propitious. This topical allusion, of course, raised much applause, and the preceding allegory inspired the Ferrarese agents with great hopes that, in the future, Ercole could count upon the aid of the Borgia against his enemies.¹

¹ These festivities are fully described in dispatches from Pozzi and Saraceni to Duke Ercole, and from El Prete to Isabella d' Este, both of January 2, 1502; documents 34 and 35 in Gregorovius, pp. 414-417 (also in his text, pp. 208-211). "All these things," wrote Gian Luca and his colleague, waxing eloquent over the allegorical portion of the entertainment, "were recited in heroic verse, right elegantly, always celebrating greatly the conjunction between Caesar and Hercules, manifestly intending us to infer that together they should do great deeds against the enemies of Hercules, in such wise that, if the results corresponded with these prognostications, our affairs would come to a right good termination." The hint is directed against Venice. In a previous dispatch, of December 28, the envoys had seen grounds for hope that the Pope would help

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Amidst her preparations for starting, Lucrezia did not forget to further Duke Ercole's rather numerous interests. She had already procured from the Pope the promise of the reversion of the bishopric of Reggio for Gian Luca Pozzi, and was exerting herself also on behalf of Don Giulio. "Since we greatly desire the honour and weal of the most illustrious Don Giulio, our son," wrote the Duke, "we pray your Ladyship, before you leave Rome, to be good enough to obtain from the Holiness of our Lord this other grace, that his Beatitude promise, as soon as an occasion presents itself, to confer a good benefice upon the said Don Giulio, such as a bishopric or a good abbey, as we believe that your Ladyship will easily obtain, through your influence, as also because of the excellent dispositions that the Holiness of our Lord bears towards us and our sons."¹ She was indefatigable in providing for the captured nuns, whom she dispatched upon their journey on January 4, giving Bartolommeo Bresciano an escort of crossbowmen and bidding him wait for her at Bologna, in order that she herself might bring them thence to Ferrara. This latter part of the plan fell through, as Ercole obviously thought it unsuitable and was anxious that the nuns should arrive some days before the bridal cortège. At Cesena, the troublesome Suora Beatrice fell ill; but, by feeding her up with marchpane and bread sopped in chicken-broth, Bartolommeo brought her round; and, avoiding Bologna, they went on to Ferrara from Faenza, by way of Lugo and Argenta. The city was already in festal array to

Ercole to recover the Polesine of Rovigo, and that, if a safe occasion presented itself, he would drive the Venetians from Ravenna and Cervia to give these places to Cesare (Balan, v. p. 524, note 2).

¹ *Minute Ducali*, undated, to Lucrezia. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*.

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greet Lucrezia, when they arrived.¹ The Duke himself came out to meet them. The same day he wrote to Lucrezia, explaining that he had instructed Bartolommeo not to wait, but to bring them on by the shorter way of Lugo and Argenta, because he thought it would be inconvenient to her to have the nuns in her train, and because he was anxious to have them with him as soon as possible. "You will be pleased that, without putting your cortège to any inconvenience, these sisters have arrived here with celerity to satisfy our desire."²

In the meanwhile, Lucrezia had turned her back for ever upon the Eternal City. She left Rome on January 6, riding a white mule covered with gold and silver trappings, all the Cardinals, ambassadors and magistrates accompanying her to the Porta del Popolo. The Pope rushed from window to window of the Vatican to follow her with his eyes as far as possible—perhaps some instinct told him that he was never to see his daughter again—and consoled himself with sending letters, both from himself and through the Cardinal of Modena, urging Ercole and Alfonso to treat her kindly. Cesare Borgia and the Cardinal Ippolito rode with her a little way, and then turned back together; an imaginary conversation between these two worthies on their return would have furnished a fitting subject for Walter Savage Landor.

The noble cavalcade of Romans and Ferrarese moved slowly through the Papal States, the people headed by their magistrates pouring out in gala attire to greet the new Duchess as she passed. In Foligno, they performed a pageant in her honour. The Lucrezia of old Rome was

¹ Gandini, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-20.

² *Minute Ducali* of January 23, 1502. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*.

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surpassed in virtue by her namesake and successor ; Paris revoked his sentence and gave the golden apple to her, as eclipsing all the ancient goddesses ; the Sultan appeared in a galley of Turks, and assured her that he would restore all the conquered Christian lands. The Ferrarese ambassadors found it stupid ; the verses, they said, were scarcely those of Petrarca, and there was no point in the whole performance.¹ Two miles from Gubbio, the Duchess Elisabetta joined them, and accompanied Lucrezia all the rest of the way. Guidobaldo himself, marked out for destruction by her House, met them near Urbino and made over his own palace to Lucrezia. Thence, on January 20, they moved slowly down to Pesaro—the city in which Lucrezia had lived as the wife of its now exiled lord, Giovanni Sforza,—where Cesare's agents received her. Here, practically for the first time, Lucrezia showed some signs of sensibility ; in her former husband's palace she kept to herself and, although she allowed a dance, was not present at it. Thence she passed on to Cesare's recent conquests of Cesena, Faenza and Imola ; at the time of her jubilant entering into the two latter towns, their dispossessed rulers, the beautiful young Astorre Manfredi and Caterina Sforza Riario, were being kept closely imprisoned in Rome, and the former was doomed to meet a fate of appalling atrocity, a few months later, by her brother's orders. At Bologna, the Bentivoglio, anxious to ingratiate themselves with the dreaded Cesare, gave her a sumptuous reception. Thence, on the morning of January 31, the bridal party started on their way to Ferrara by canal and river.²

¹ Dispatch of Pozzi and Saraceni, January 13, 1502. Gregorovius, document 37.

² It will be remembered that the courses of the Reno and Po have

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On the evening of the same day, they arrived at Castello Bentivoglio, about twenty miles from Ferrara. Here the bridegroom, Don Alfonso, suddenly appeared upon the scene. He had come disguised with four horsemen to see his bride, stayed with her for a couple of hours, and then went back to Ferrara. This surprise visit of his, which was quite contrary to the usual ceremonial etiquette on these occasions, made an excellent impression. "It pleased all the people," writes Zambotto, "and much more the bride and all her friends, that his lordship should desire to see her and that he should be taking her with good heart, for it was a sign that she would be well received and better treated."¹

Isabella had come from Mantua to do the honours of Ferrara to Lucrezia, and with the old Duke she arranged the whole thing. In her letters to her husband, she describes every detail in the pageantry and festivities, with many pretty little messages to him and to the children, especially the *puttino* Federigo, but shows clearly that she disliked the situation and was not over pleased at her brother's wedding. Still her bearing towards the bride was cordiality itself. On February 1, she met her in her barge at Malalbergo; and together with the Duchess Elisabetta, Don Ferrando and Sigismondo, they went on to Torre della Fossa, the point where the canal joined the Po di Ferrara or Canale di Cento, which thence led to Ferrara itself. Cloth of gold and crimson silk, with profusion of pearls, was the distinguishing feature in the dress of Lucrezia; Isabella wore a robe of green velvet worked with gold; the more sober-minded

been completely altered since those days. A canal then ran from Bologna to join the Po di Primaro near Ferrara itself.

¹ *Lucrezia Borgia in Ferrara, sposa a Don Alfonso d' Este*, pp. 12, 13 (Ferrara, 1867. Cf. below, p. 418, note 1).

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Elisabetta was clad in black velvet covered with golden devices. At Torre, the ducal bucentaur was in readiness, with the ambassadors of France and all the Italian Powers on board ; Ercole and Alfonso, with their Court, were waiting on foot on the shore, and the mounted crossbowmen, *balestrieri*, in their gala dress of red and white, drawn up behind them. Lucrezia sprang to shore and was embraced by Ercole (it was the first time that they had seen each other), who attempted to prevent her kissing his hand. Then they all entered the great bucentaur, where the ambassadors were presented, and Lucrezia took her seat between the representatives of France and Venice, Ercole and Alfonso going up on the poop and amusing themselves with the bride's Spanish buffoons, who sang her praises. Amidst popular acclamation and salvos of artillery, they landed near the Porta San Paolo, and Lucrezia was brought for the night to the palace of Alberto d' Este in the Borgo San Luca, where Lucrezia d' Este Bentivoglio did the honours.

On February 2, the Feast of the Purification of the Madonna, this new Roman Lucrezia made her state entry into Ferrara. After hearing Mass and having dinner, Ercole and Alfonso, with Alberto d' Este and the French ambassador, Monsignor Filippo della Rocca Berti, came to fetch her. They entered the city by the Ponte del Castel Tedaldo, Lucrezia, a mass of superb jewels and gems, in every sense mistress of herself and of the situation. A beautiful white horse, the Duke's gift, had been brought her, covered with crimson cloth with most sumptuous ornaments of gold and pearls. At the entrance to the city, the sudden discharge of artillery frightened the animal, which reared and threw her. There was general consternation for a moment ; but she landed on her feet, laughing gaily, and the Duke made her

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mount a mule instead. Looking round, she saw the French ambassador between the two Venetian envoys, and at once summoned him to her side, a position of honour which he retained for the rest of that day.

The procession was headed by three squadrons of mounted *balestrieri* of the ducal guard, in red and white uniforms with white French hats and huge plumes, followed by more than a hundred trumpeters, pipers, and drummers. Then came all the courtiers and nobles of Ferrara, gorgeously arrayed and wearing massive gold chains and necklaces, attending upon Don Alfonso himself, who, mounted upon a superb bay horse, dressed in dark velvet covered with scales of beaten gold and wearing a black and gold velvet cap with white feathers, rode slowly forward, accompanied by Annibale Bentivoglio. The attendants of the Duchess of Urbino followed. Next came the bridal cortège proper: twenty Spanish and Roman gentlemen, riding two and two; five bishops, to wit, the Estensi of Adria and Comacchio, the Bishop of Cervia, and two sent by the Pope, who, in spite of Ercole's solicitation, had declared that it would not be possible to allow a Cardinal to accompany the bride on this occasion; and the ambassadors of the Tuscan Republics, of Venice and of Rome, in crimson mantles and brocade of gold. More musicians followed, with Lucrezia's two buffoons, to introduce a lighter note. Then, under a canopy of crimson silk carried by the doctors of the universities, appeared Lucrezia herself, riding her mule (the restive horse being led along in front), waited upon by six of her husband's chamberlains, and with the French ambassador riding alone by her side under the canopy. Isabella, in describing the pageant to the Marquis, noted that among the magnificent jewels blazing all over her were those that

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Ercole had sent to Rome, including the ones that had belonged to the writer's own mother, "the blessed memory of Madama of Ferrara." Radiant with exultation, her sweet girl-like face and slender figure making her appear even younger than she really was, Lucrezia won the hearts of her future subjects on the very day she entered the city, and had already almost reconciled the House of Este to the relationship. Side by side, Ercole himself and the Duchess Elisabetta followed after the canopy. A troop of "gentlewomen and fair damosels," led by Angela and Girolama Borgia, the Pope's nieces, Adriana dei Mila and one of the Orsini, rode next, with Lucrezia Bentivoglio and many others following in fourteen chariots, of which the first two were drawn by white horses and covered with gold brocade. Then followed some two hundred more *balestrieri*, partly mounted, partly marching on foot. A long array of mules, decked in *morello* and yellow, the bride's colours, brought up the rear, carrying her goods and treasures.

At intervals along the way were the inevitable triumphal arches, painted with allegorical devices and mythological scenes. At four places were representations and recitations, which to Niccolò Cagnolo, who was in the suite of the French ambassador, seemed "most worthy," but Isabella, writing to her husband, declared them not worth mention. The three goddesses with the golden apple, Hercules with the god of Love, Mercury with nymphs appeared in succession, singing verses in honour of the bride and bridegroom; nymphs and bucephalous men, with satyrs, danced and gamboled round Europa mounted upon the red bull of the House of Borgia. It was evening by the time that the procession reached the great piazza. Instantly all the prisoners in the city were released, while from the Torre di Rigobello and the tower

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of the Palazzo della Ragione two acrobats flew down on ropes, amidst the applause of the vast crowd that had gathered together in Ferrara from every province of Italy to see the wedding. "So full was the piazza in every part," writes the Ferrarese Diarist, "that if a grain of millet had fallen to earth, it would not have reached the ground." At the head of the great stairway of the palace (the Corte Vecchia), Isabella, in a marvellous robe embroidered over with notes of music, with Laura Gonzaga and the Estensian ladies, received the bride; while, without in the piazza, all the musicians gathered together and played a long harmonious welcome, the *balestrieri* seized the baldacchino, and the servants of Ercole and of Alfonso fought together for the possession of Lucrezia's mule.¹

Six days of festivities followed, with a series of dramatic representations from Plautus, lightened by masques and morris-dances. In the afternoon of the day after Lucrezia's arrival, February 3, there was a great ball in the Sala Grande of the Corte. Lucrezia appeared in all her glory, and "danced many dances in the Roman and Spanish fashion to the sound of her tambourine-players." The crowd was so great that, after the bride had danced her dances alone, there was no room for much general dancing. Then came the comedies. First the Duke exhibited to his guests all the costumes that

¹ Our chief contemporary sources for this "most happy and most fortunate" bringing of Lucrezia to Ferrara, and the "pomp and spectacles" of her wedding, are: the *relazione* of Niccolò Cagnolo of Parma, inserted by Zambotto into his chronicle and printed by Antonelli, *Lucrezia Borgia in Ferrara* (an excerpt from Zambotto corresponding to ff. 359-380v of his chronicle); Sanudo, *Diarii*, iv. coll. 222-230; the letters of Isabella d'Este to her husband, in D'Arco, *Notizie di Isabella d'Este*, pp. 303-309; the *Diario Ferrarese*, coll. 410-413.

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were to be worn by the actors in all the performances, "in order," Isabella wrote to her husband, "that it might be known that these dresses were made on purpose, and that those of one comedy would not have to serve for the others." Then an actor came forward in the person of Plautus, and recited a prologue explaining the arguments of all the five comedies that were to be played during the week. On this first night, the *Epidicus* was represented, with five *bellissime moresche* between the acts, including a mock fight of gladiators and a somewhat trivial allegory of the triumph of virtue. After the dance, on the next evening, the *Bacchides* was given, which, with its *moresche*, lasted five hours. One of these morris-dances included a dance of wild men, with horns of plenty full of some inflammable stuff that blazed up as they moved, and the deliverance of a distressed maiden from a voracious dragon by a knight. The *Miles Gloriosus* was represented on the evening of February 6, with dances of men covered with blazing torches so that they seemed all on fire, horned shepherds butting against each other as they danced, a triumph of Cupid, a dance of jugglers with darts and daggers. The next evening they had the *Asinaria*, with new *moresche* between the acts, dances of satyrs, mimic hunts of beasts and birds, and, at the end, the triumph of Agriculture, a symbolical pageant of the whole life of the fields from sowing to harvest. Women took part in these entertainments as well as men and boys, the total number of actors being over a hundred. On the last day of the festivities, February 8, which happened to be Shrove Tuesday, after the dance in the Sala Grande, there was a sumptuous performance of the *Casina* in another room, at which more than three thousand persons were present. The interludes were especially admired, though to-day they appear some-

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what pointless. One apparently symbolized the victory of Love and Music over rude and savage natures, while in another twelve Swiss danced a *moresca*, fighting with their halberds in time to the orchestra.¹

Isabella's daily letters to the Marquis of Mantua give us a vivid picture of these days, not untinged with a touch of malice. The ladies have always to wait for Lucrezia, because she lingers for hours over her toilet, in order to surpass the Duchess of Urbino and the writer, whereas "I will not pass over in silence, in my own praises, that I am always the first up and dressed." As for the plays and interludes, they bored the Marchesana terribly, and the whole marriage seemed to her to be very cold. "I will not deny," she says, "that your Excellence is taking more pleasure in seeing my little boy every day than I am getting out of these festivities," and she consoles herself by sending kiss after kiss to their *puttino*. As to the *Bacchides*, she found it so long and tedious that she wished herself many times at Mantua. "It seems to me a thousand years till I am there again, both to see your Lordship and my little son, and to get away from here, where there is no pleasure in the world. Your Excellence need not envy me for having come to this wedding, because it has been so cold an affair that I envy those who have remained at Mantua."² The *Casina*, she said, "was as lascivious and impure as one can say"; and indeed her secretary, Benedetto Capiluppo, writing to the Marquis, assured him that she had openly shown her displeasure during the performance, and had forbidden any of her damsels to be present at it.³

¹ Cagnolo, *loc. cit.*, pp. 48-65; Sanudo, *op. cit.*, iv. coll. 225, 226; Gregorovius, pp. 238-250.

² Letters of February 3 and 5. D'Arco, *op. cit.*, pp. 307, 308.

³ Luzio, *I Precettori d'Isabella d'Este*, pp. 36, 37.

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There was, however, one personage who enjoyed himself immensely throughout these days, and that was Monsignor the ambassador of the Most Christian King. Every one, but especially the ladies, courted him and heaped attentions upon him. On the Friday, February 4, Ercole came with a great train to the Palazzo Bentivoglio, where he was lodged, and took him to Santa Caterina, where, after hearing Mass, they had mystical talk with Lucia, whose wounds were that day gushing out blood afresh. She gave him some pieces of cloth which she had held over them, and then the Duke took him away to inspect his artillery. The next day, Monsignor gave rich presents ; to the Duke, a shield of gold enamelled with a St. Francis, “ of very subtle workmanship of Paris ” ; to Lucrezia, a golden rosary exquisitely wrought ; to Alfonso and Ferrando, shields like the Duke’s, with St. Mary Magdalene and St. Francis, respectively ; and “ to the most illustrious Madonna Angela Borgia, a most elegant damosel,” he gave “ a chain or collar of gold, most subtly worked and of notable value.” That evening, there being no state ball or performance, Isabella gave a little supper in his honour, the Duchess of Urbino being the chief guest. After supper, “ the Lady Marchesana herself with her lute in hand sang several canzonette, with the greatest melody and sweetness ” ; and when, after an hour’s secret talk in her chamber in the presence of two of her damsels, he rose to take his leave, she gave him the gloves which she had on her hands, “ which the Lord Ambassador accepted with reverence and love, as proceeding from that most sweet fountain. Verily, they will be preserved by him in a holy place even unto the consummation of the world.” ¹

¹ Cagnolo, *loc. cit.*, pp. 52, 54-57.

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The next morning, the Sunday of the carnival, the Duke sent him a magnificent golden collar, with golden pendants set with rubies, diamonds and large pearls. At High Mass in the Duomo he was the chief personage when the Bishop of Carniola, specially deputed from Rome for the purpose, confirmed the Ferrarese duchy to Don Alfonso, placing the ducal cap upon his head and the blessed sword in his hands in the name of the Pope. It was noticed that neither Duke Ercole himself nor the Venetian orators were present.

On the day after the performance of the last comedy (Ash Wednesday, February 9), the Venetian orators came to take their leave of Lucrezia. They found the Marchesana of Mantua and the Duchess of Urbino with her, and took the occasion to pay their farewell visits to them too, with the usual ceremonious observances and speeches in the name of the Republic. Isabella promptly answered them back in kind, "with such great elegance and prudence that it would have sufficed for every consummate orator," and sounded her husband's praises so eloquently that all that heard were astounded. Elisabetta answered wisely in her turn. But poor Lucrezia, probably painfully conscious that she had neither the wit nor talent of her two rivals, was not equally successful. "Although she has had to do with more men than have your wife and sister," wrote Capiluppo to the Marquis, "she got nowhere near their prudent replies."¹

Duke Ercole, however, appeared more than satisfied with the way the whole affair of the marriage had been carried

¹ Letter of February 9 from Capiluppo to the Marquis of Mantua. Luzio, *I Precettori d'Isabella d'Este*, pp. 36, 37. By a printer's error, it is dated February 17, in *Mantova e Urbino*, pp. 114, 115. The secretary's equivoque, *ha praticato più homini*, etc., is of course intentional and malicious.

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through, and his letter to the Pope may be taken as the final reception of Alexander's bastard daughter into the noblest and proudest House of Italy :—

“ Before the most illustrious Duchess, our common daughter, arrived here, my firm intention was to caress her and honour her, as is fitting, and not to fail in anything pertaining to singular affection. Now that her Ladyship has come here, she has so satisfied me, by the virtues and worthy qualities that I find in her, that not only am I confirmed in this good disposition, but the desire and intention to do so have greatly increased in me ; and so much the more as I see your Holiness, by a brief in your own hand, lovingly suggests this to me. Let your Holiness be of good cheer, because I shall treat the said Duchess in such wise that your Beatitude may know that I hold her Ladyship for the dearest thing that I have in the world.” ¹

¹ Letter of February 14, 1502. Gregorovius, document 38.

Chapter XII

THE LAST YEARS OF DUKE ERCOLE

THE coming of the Duchess Lucrezia was the last great pageant that Ferrara saw for more than a quarter of a century. It was the turning point in this strange woman's life. Henceforth she appears as a model of propriety, and no breath of scandal again soils her name. She had already completely gained the heart of the old Duke and the enthusiastic admiration of her new subjects. She conquered the aversion of her husband and even, to some extent, won his affection. A little later, that model of Christian chivalry, the chevalier Bayard, and his French knights exalted her as the ideal of noble womanhood. When, after seventeen years, Alfonso announced her death to Federigo Gonzaga, there can be no question of the heartfelt sincerity of his grief for the loss "of so sweet and dear a companion, for such was she to me, by reason of her gracious character and the tender love that there was betwixt us."¹

Not that this happy result was immediately obtained. Alfonso at first made no pretence of being faithful to his Borgian bride, nor did the Pope expect it of him. Once satisfied that the two continually slept together—the Borgias evidently dreading lest the same trick should be

¹ Letter of June 24, 1519. Gregorovius, p. 336. Cf. Yriarte, *Autour des Borgia*, p. 139.

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played upon them as they had served Giovanni Sforza—his Holiness professed himself perfectly contented, and saw no objection to Alfonso, for the rest, taking his pleasure where he chose.¹ And, as a matter of fact, Lucrezia saw but little of her formidable husband in these first years of her married life in Ferrara. Alfonso was either absorbed in his favourite mechanical pursuits, or else absent from the city, travelling in Italy and France, which gave him a wider outlook upon the world than had most of his Italian contemporaries, but naturally did not tend to make him popular with his future subjects.

We have already met the son of the Venetian Visdomino, who had come to inform Ercole and Isabella of the alliance between France and the Signoria.² This youth, then nineteen years old, was no other than Pietro Bembo, whose father had represented Venice in Ferrara since 1497, and who was destined in after years to play the part by turns of the Socrates and the literary dictator of the sixteenth century. Young though he was, he was already a leading figure in the literary circles of the city, when the new Duchess came to Ferrara. He fell madly in love with her, and she encouraged his devotion. On Lucrezia's part, indeed, it seems to have been nothing more than an acceptance of the courtly service of the latter-day troubadour to his lady; but it is clear that Bembo's worship was more passionate,

¹ Cf. the extract from Beltrando Costabili's dispatch of April 1, 1502. Gregorovius, p. 267. But, after an illness of Lucrezia's in the summer of this year, Alfonso went to Loreto to satisfy a vow made to the Madonna for her recovery. He had vowed to go on foot, but Ercole had him dispensed and sent in a ship. *Minute Ducali* to Beltrando Costabili, October 9, 1502. Archivio di Modena, *Minutario Cronologico*.

² See above, p. 346, note.

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and Lucrezia seems to have received letters from him which would have seriously compromised both, if they had fallen into the hands of her husband.¹ More frequently, however, Angela Borgia, her cousin and favourite lady-in-waiting, appears to have been at once the screen of the poet's love and his emissary in approaching the Duchess. "They say," wrote the daring lover, when absent from Ferrara, probably at Venice, "that each one has a good Angel who prays for him. I pray that Angel, who can pray for me, that he pray to FF for what he knows that I need. This much know I, that my steadfast and pure faith deserves that you should be the friend of pity towards me. For if I were an Angel, as he is, I should be seized with much pity for each one who loved in the way that I love. With my heart do I now kiss that hand of yours which I shall soon come to kiss with the mouth that ever has your fair name upon it—nay, rather, with this soul, that would in that moment come to my lips to take in this wise a sweet vengeance for its sweet wound."² But though Lucrezia accepted his homage and even came to his bedside to visit him in an illness, she had no thought of playing Guenevere to his Lancelot.

¹ Bembo's letters to Lucrezia are contained in vol. viii. of the collected edition of his works (Milan, 1805-13), those openly addressed to her being among the letters "a Principesse e Signore ed altre Gentili Donne scritte," the others (numbered only) among the "lettere giovanili e amorose." Can the compromising letter 91, dated Venice, February 10, 1503, be really to her?

² Letter 84. FF is Lucrezia; the allusion to an Angel in the masculine, as a different person from the recipient of the letter, is an intentional piece of mystification. A comparison of this with the other letters (e.g. 86) makes it clear that it is addressed, not to Lucrezia herself, but to Angela. We may here remark that Angela Borgia was a grand-daughter of the Pope's sister, Juana, and therefore second cousin to the Duchess.

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In the meanwhile, Cesare Borgia was not hiding his one talent in the earth. At the beginning of June, 1502, he had young Astorre Manfredi and his boy brother brutally murdered, and their bodies flung into the Tiber. Having thus brought the succession of Faenza to a satisfactory conclusion, he suddenly and treacherously invaded the Duchy of Urbino. The whole duchy was lost in a day, the fortress of San Leo alone holding out for a few weeks, while Duke Guidobaldo, flying for his life with his adopted nephew and heir, the little Francesco Maria della Rovere, and hunted from place to place like a felon, escaped to Ravenna, and thence, through the Ferrarese territory, to Mantua. There he found the Marquis "so affectionate that one could not desire more."¹ Isabella indeed, on the first news of the conquest of Urbino, attempted to obtain for herself a share of the spoils, in the shape of a marble Venus and a Cupid, which, she said, she was sure that Cesare could spare her, "understanding that his Excellence does not take much delight in antiquities";² but she was most kind to both Guidobaldo and Elisabetta, and put pressure upon her husband to use all his influence with the King of France on their behalf, while he was in attendance upon him at Milan. A few days later she wrote, wild with sudden terror, hearing that he had spoken ill of the Borgia in the presence of the King and of some of the papal agents, to implore him to take all possible precautions lest Cesare should have him poisoned for his words. For her sake and for that of their child (Cesare's own god-son, be it observed!), let him be more

¹ Guidobaldo describes his escape in a long letter of June 28, 1502, from Mantua to the Cardinal Giuliano. Alvisi, document 60.

² Letter of June 30, 1502, to the Cardinal Ippolito. *Ibid.*, document 61.

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careful at table and have his food properly tasted. "My Lord, do not make mock of this letter of mine, nor say that women are cowardly and always afraid; for the malignity of these men is far greater than my fear or your Lordship's courage."¹

Remembering her own happy visit to Urbino on her way to Ferrara a few months before, Lucrezia expressed the greatest sorrow at the misfortunes of Guidobaldo and Elisabetta, and protested that, to the utmost of her power, she would never fail them.² Ercole, however, would not commit himself. "You will have heard," he wrote to Alfonso, who, like the Marquis of Mantua, was with the King at Milan, "of the acquisition which the most illustrious Duke of Romagna has made of the Duchy of Urbino. It can well be that men speak variously of this affair there, as also they do here. We have therefore thought well to warn you that, if you speak about it, you speak in such a way that you do not offend the Most Christian Majesty or any of his friends, nor the said most illustrious Duke of Romagna; but with modesty and wisely, so that no one can take exception to what you say, and according as in your prudence you shall know what to do, you being there on the spot."³

France and Spain were now about to rend each other for the spoils of conquered Naples. Ercole, who, besides sending Alfonso and Sigismondo, had personally met and paid his homage to King Louis in the short visit that the latter had made to the Milanese duchy this summer, natur-

¹Letter of July 23, 1502. Luzio and Renier, *Mantova e Urbino*, pp. 136, 137.

²Luzio and Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

³*Minute Ducali* of June 30, 1502. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*.

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ally attached himself to the side of France. By a letter dated from Milan, on September 22, the King invested "our well-beloved kinsman, the Duke of Ferrara," with the town of Cottignola—very much against the will of the inhabitants. They made a hostile demonstration against the ducal commissary when he entered the town, on October 25; the *contadini* joined with the townsfolk, men, women and children, in shouting "Franza, Franza," until the royal procurator, Cesare Guaschi, reassured them by a glowing account of the clemency and benignity of Ercole's rule.¹ Their special fear seems to have been lest they should be put under the commissary of Lugo, or some other Ferrarese official in Romagna. In the following year, Ercole sent some six thousand *balestrieri* and men-at-arms to Mantua, to join the royal army that was being gathered in Lombardy under Gonzaga's command; and, although broken in health, he went himself to Parma to confer with the commander-in-chief, la Trémoille. The Ferrarese contingent, under Giulio Tassoni and others, was in the French army that, at the end of 1503, Gonsalvo crushed at the Garigliano.

Lucrezia had by this time completely settled down in her position as Duchess of Ferrara—the title already given to her in anticipation by all the Court and by Duke Ercole himself. At the carnival of 1503, when the *Menaechmi* was represented, the chroniclers describe her as sitting by the Duke's side, "most ornately attired, with great jewels."

¹ See documents in Alvisi, pp. 540, 541. Ercole had previously instructed his envoy to ask the King for Cottignola, on the plea that, although it was held by the Duchy of Milan, it had paid no taxes to Milan, and had formerly belonged to the Estensi. *Istruzione per Francia a Giovanni Valla*, August 29, 1500. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio degli Ambasciatori—Francia*:

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The Holy Week of this year was celebrated with much solemnity, as was always done in Ferrara when the conditions of Italy were more than usually disturbed and threatening. On Maundy Thursday, April 13, the Duke gave a sumptuous dinner to a hundred and fifty poor men in the Sala Grande of the Palace, himself with his sons and chief courtiers waiting upon them at table. Afterwards, on his knees, he washed and wiped the feet of all, and gave them presents of clothes and money, while his choristers sang the antiphons prescribed by the Church, beginning with the *mandatum novum*: "A new commandment I give unto you: that you love one another, as I have loved you, saith the Lord." On Good Friday, after the sermon and Mass, the whole Passion of Christ was represented on a great stage erected in the Duomo, Lucrezia and her ladies sitting with Ercole on a raised platform opposite. Near the roof a Heaven had been constructed, which opened and from which an Angel descended with the chalice to Christ who prayed in the Garden. Before the high altar was Mount Calvary, with the Crucifixion. At the other end of the stage was the mouth of Hell, in the form of the head of a gigantic serpent, out of which trooped the ducal choristers, robed as the fathers in Limbo, "sweetly singing lauds." "Everything was done in praiseworthy fashion. It lasted five hours, with much devotion."¹

A few days after Easter, Isabella came from Mantua, received by Lucrezia with all possible demonstrations of love and affection. There were more miracle-plays performed in the Duomo, at which the two ladies and the Duke were present. The Annunciation, in which the Angel Gabriel

¹ Zambotto, ff. 389v, 390.

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descended to the Blessed Virgin in a wonderful rain of light, especially moved Isabella's not too facile admiration, and it was followed by the Visitation to St. Elizabeth and the Dream of Joseph. The whole was in much the same style as the representation on Good Friday had been. On another day, they had the Adoration of the Magi and the Massacre of the Innocents.¹ In consequence of the recent death of the Duke's half-brother, Rinaldo d' Este, the customary horse-race for the feast of St. George, April 24, was not run; but Ercole instead gave the prize, the *palio* of gold brocade, "to the monastery of the sisters of Santa Caterina where Suora Lucia of the Stigmata lives."² The Duke was much concerned with Lucia's wants and wishes in this year, and was in correspondence with his nephew, the Bishop of Adria, on the subject. On June 18, we find him writing to the latter at Viterbo, inclosing a communication "which is of very great importance," to be sent on instantly with all speed to Bartolommeo Bresciano at Narni. The mysterious inclosure, treated thus as though it were an urgent political document, is simply this:—

"Herewith we send thee a letter that the mother Suora Lucia writes to Suora Anna; we would have thee give it to her instantly, and from it you will see all that she writes

¹ Letter from Isabella d' Este to the Marquis of Mantua, April 24, 1503. D'Arco, *Notizie*, pp. 310, 311; Zambotto, ff. 391v, 392.

² Zambotto, f. 392. In the previous February, Berardo da Recanati, physician of the Pope and bishop-elect of Venosa, had examined the stigmata in the presence of Ercole, Lucrezia, the papal vicar-general Pietro Gambo, and Guglielmo Raimondo (a nephew of Alexander), and reported that they had all been profoundly edified by Lucia's conversation. Document in Giacomo Marcianese, *Narratione*, pp. 204-207, and Ponsi, *op. cit.*, pp. 216-219.

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to her. Wherefore, we will and commit to you that you should execute all that is contained in that letter.”¹

Although the Cardinal Juan Borgia held the Bishopric of Ferrara, he never set foot in the city. On bad terms with his papal uncle, he still remained in Rome, heaping up wealth. Paolo Cappello had told the Venetians that the Cardinal “would gladly lead the life of a merchant; he would like to have thirty thousand ducats on his desk, and lend them out at usury. He is most miserly; he thinks much of a ducat.”² This was a dangerous kind of life to lead in the Rome of the Borgias, especially when the Pope was your heir and Cesare needed money for his mercenary soldiers, to complete his conquest of the rebellious feudatories of the Church. At the beginning of August, the Cardinal suddenly died, and the Pope succeeded to the vast wealth that he had left behind him. Antonio Giustinian, who had replaced Cappello as Venetian orator in Rome, wrote to the Doge that it was believed that the Cardinal had been poisoned by Cesare.³ His nephew, Guglielmo Raimondo, the captain of the Palatine Guard, died about the same time. From a window of the Vatican, Alexander watched

¹ Archivio di Modena, *Minutario Cronologico*, June 18, 1503. The phrasing is a little ambiguous, but I take it that it is from the letter and not from Anna that Bresciano is to have the explanation. Lucia's letter has not been preserved, but presumably it was about getting more nuns, as there had been fresh desertions from the convent.

² Sanudo, *Diarii*, iii. col. 843.

³ Dispatches of August 2 and 3, 1503. *Dispacci di Antonio Giustinian*, ii. pp. 92-94. “It is publicly affirmed that he, too, has been sent by the way along which have gone all the others, after they have grown right plump, and the fault of this is laid to the Duke's door.” The Cardinal Michiel had certainly been poisoned by Cesare in the previous year, and possibly the Cardinal Ferrari. Cf. Pastor, iii. pp. 464-466.

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the funeral procession. "This month is deadly for fat people," he muttered. A dark bird of some kind flew in to the room, and fell down at his feet. The terrified Pontiff fled into his bedroom, repeating again and again: "An evil omen, an evil omen is this."¹

A fortnight later, a thrill of exultation ran through all in Italy who looked for righteousness. Pope Alexander VI was dead. He died on August 18, of a fever contracted at the famous supper at the villa of the Cardinal of Corneto; and Cesare himself lay at death's door. The contemporary legend of the two, father and son, having been poisoned by the wine that they had prepared for their host, is now rejected by all serious historians—relegated to the same category as the wonderful account given by the Marquis of Mantua to Isabella of how the devil in person had come to claim the soul of his creature, who had sold himself to him for the Popedom and whose time was now expired.²

Ercole was usually cautious in his written utterances, but this time he spoke plainly. "To make thee clear about that which thou art asked by many," he wrote to Gian Giorgio Seregnio, his ambassador at Milan, "whether we are sorry for the death of the Pope, we assure thee that it does not displease us in any respect; on the contrary, for the honour of our Lord God and for the universal utility of Christendom, we have for a long while desired that the Divine goodness and providence should give us a good and exemplary pastor, and that so great a scandal should be taken away from the Church. Nor could our own private interests make us desire otherwise, because the honour of God and the universal weal will preponderate with us. But we tell thee

¹ Sigismondo de' Conti, ii. p. 267; Yriarte, *César Borgia*, ii. p. 152.

² Gregorovius, document 49.

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further that never was there a Pope from whom we had not more favour and satisfaction than from this, even after the affinity contracted with him ; we have only and hardly had what he was bound to, for which we did not depend upon his faith ; in nothing else, great or small, have we been gratified by him. This we believe to have come about in great part through the fault of the Duke of Romagna, who, because he could not use us as he would have wished, has treated us as a stranger, nor ever been open with us nor communicated his proceedings to us ; neither have we communicated ours to him. And latterly, since he inclines to the Spaniards and sees us loyal to France, we have never hoped for any advantage either from the Pope or from his Lordship. Therefore we are not sorry for this death, and were expecting nothing but evil from the greatness of the said Lord Duke. We wish you to communicate this our secret exactly to the Lord Grand Master,¹ as we would not have our mind concealed from his Lordship ; but speak discreetly about it to others, and then send back this letter to the reverend Messer Gian Luca our counsellor.”²

Lucrezia's position at Ferrara was not a pleasant one at this juncture—and was only rendered tolerable by the tact and kindness of Ercole. The King of France openly hinted that she might be repudiated. “ I know,” he said to the Ferrarese ambassador, “ that you have never been pleased at that marriage ; this Madama Lucrezia is not even the effective wife of Don Alfonso.”³ She probably heard something of the horrible stories of her father's death that spread through Italy, and certainly realized the danger in which

¹ Chaumont, the French governor of Milan.

² Letter of August 24, 1503. Gregorovius, document 46.

³ Gregorovius, pp. 274, 275.

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her brother was. Bembo has painted in touching words her appearance in the first burst of her misery, in her darkened room, robed in black and with the marks of abundant weeping on her face.¹ But no ungenerous thoughts seem to have found place in the hearts of the Estensian sovereigns. In spite of what he had written to Milan, Ercole lent ear to Cesare's appeal through the Ferrarese ambassador in Rome, and—seeing that the only choice was between him and the Venetians—sent Pandolfo Collenuccio into Romagna to prevail upon his subjects to remain faithful. Nevertheless, Duke Guidobaldo returned to Urbino and Giovanni Sforza re-entered Pesaro in triumph. At the beginning of September, Cesare was conveyed in a litter to Nepi, where he put himself under the protection of the army of France, which was in the neighbourhood under the nominal command of the Marquis of Mantua. A few days later, Ercole wrote to congratulate him on his convalescence and on his wisdom in throwing in his lot with the French. “As to your affairs in Romagna,” he wrote, “we have sent a suitable person to those peoples, to do what your Lordship, before you left Rome, had us besought by the letters of our ambassador there, to keep their minds well disposed and steadfast in their devotion to your Excellence. As you will have heard, our men-at-arms are in the camp of the Most Christian King. We are certain that the authority and will of his Most Christian Majesty will make such provision that your Lordship, where need shall arise, will be succoured by his protection.”²

¹ Letter to the Duchess, of August 22, 1503 (*Opere*, vol. viii. pp. 5-7). Cf. Canello, *Storia della Letteratura Italiana nel secolo xvi.*, p. 24, for real date of the letter.

² Letter of September 15, 1503, from Codigoro. Alvisi, *op. cit.*, pp. 581, 582.

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In the downfall of her House, Lucrezia's little son Rodrigo had lost his duchy, and even his life was threatened. The Cardinal of Cosenza, his guardian, proposed to sell all his goods and convey him in safety to Spain. Ercole, in a very kind and fatherly letter, urged Lucrezia to agree to the Cardinal's proposals :—

“ We have had the letter of your Ladyship, together with that of Monsignor the most reverend Cardinal of Cosenza directed to you, which you have sent us, which we send back to you with this of ours, and which has not been read by any person save by us ; and we have noted the very prudent writing of your Ladyship and of the said most reverend Cardinal, who is moved by so many good reasons that one cannot but judge that he is loving and wise. Wherefore, after considering the whole, it seems to us that your Ladyship can and ought to consent to all that the said most reverend Monsignor proposes to do. We think that your Ladyship owes him some gratitude, for the demonstration and proof of so much cordial love that he clearly bears to you and to the most illustrious Don Rodorico your son, who, one can say, has been preserved in life by his means. And although Don Rodorico will be somewhat severed from your Ladyship, it is better to be so far away and safe, than near with the danger in which he evidently would be ; nor, because of this distance, will the love between you be at all diminished. When he has grown up, he will be able according to the condition of the times to decide on his own course, whether to return to Italy or to stay ; and it is a good provision which Monsignor the Cardinal suggests, to sell his movable goods and purchase there, to supply his needs, increasing his income, as he says he will do. Wherefore, on every consideration, as we have said, it seems to us

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that it is well to agree to his will. Nevertheless if to your Ladyship, who is most prudent, it should seem otherwise, we yield to your better judgment.”¹

Needless to say that Ercole was profoundly interested in the election of a successor to Pope Alexander. It would have been the first conclave in which a member of the House of Este had taken part ; but Ippolito fell from his horse on the way to Rome, and was laid up at Florence. Ercole, by letters to Bartolommeo de' Cavallieri and to King Louis himself, pledged his son to do his utmost for the election of “a good pastor and one that would please the Most Christian Majesty,” but regretted that Ippolito's fall would make it impossible for him actually to vote.² He wrote to him from Belriguardo, that he had heard from the Grand Master (Chaumont) at Milan that the King wished to do all that was possible to secure the election of the Cardinal of Rouen, “in which his Majesty and the said Grand Master desire your vote and your work.” Although the news of his accident has reached Milan, Chaumont still seems to hope that Ippolito can have himself brought to Rome in time for the conclave. “It would please us much if your most reverend Lordship were in such a state that you could do it, because this is a very great occasion to be able to satisfy the Most Christian Majesty and the most reverend and most illustrious Monsignor the Legate.” But, if he really cannot move, let him pay all the honour that he possibly can to the Cardinals of the French faction (the Legate Amboise himself,

¹ Letter of October 4, from Codigoro. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*. It is not quite accurately transcribed in Gregorovius, document 50.

² *Minute Ducali* of August 28, 1503. Archivio di Modena, *Minutario Cronologico*.

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Ascanio Sforza, who had been released from his French captivity on condition of supporting Amboise's candidature, and the Cardinal of Aragon) when they pass through Florence, "not omitting to inform his most illustrious and most reverend Lordship of what you were going to do in favour of his election, and also that you had been exhorted about this by us, and that we had bidden you follow and do all that you understood to be the will of the Most Christian King." ¹

Finding his own elevation impossible, the Cardinal of Rouen supported the nomination of the excellent old Cardinal of Siena, Francesco Piccolomini, who was elected Pope on September 22, and took the title of Pius III, in memory of his uncle. The new Pontiff had always shown himself most friendly towards the Estensi, and the Duke and Cardinal shared in the general satisfaction. Ercole wrote to implore Ippolito to send him every minute detail of the way in which the election had been carried out. "Suppose that we know nothing about it, and that we would fain understand it and see it as if we had been present. Assume that we are entirely ignorant of this elevation, and that we must needs be informed about it from the alpha to the omega." ² By a brief dated October 8, the day of his own coronation, the new Pontiff conferred upon Ippolito the vacant bishopric of Ferrara. Ten days later, to the genuine grief of all Rome, Pius died.

Ercole was quite resolved, for once, to have a voice in the election of the new Pontiff. He dispatched a long letter to Ippolito—who was, by now, sufficiently recovered from

¹ *Minute* to Ippolito of August 29, 1503. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*. It will be remembered that the Cardinal Amboise of Rouen was Papal Legate in France.

² *Minute Ducali* of September 24, 1503. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*.

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his fall—concerning the vote he was to give in the coming conclave. “We make first a general presupposition,” he writes, “that we should not be pleased at the election of a Cardinal who was not an Italian; and, therefore, your Lordship, if you wish to conform with our views, must not give your voice to any one who is not an Italian, excepting the most reverend Cardinal of Rouen, who, it cannot be denied, is out of the question for the causes known to your Lordship.” Among the Italians, he would greatly like Naples (Caraffa), Santa Prassede (Pallavicino), or the Cardinal of Alessandria (San Giorgio); but Ippolito must be careful not to offend Amboise by his vote. He is to do what he can, in an underhand way, against the Cardinal of San Pietro in Vincoli, Giuliano della Rovere. “If Rouen should use his power for San Pietro in Vincoli, you can warn him that San Pietro in Vincoli has always been most friendly to the Venetians, and they have more confidence in him and would favour him more than any other Cardinal, and they have had the votes of Grimani and Cornaro given him, as you know, and that therefore it is to be feared that, if he be made Pope, he will not be a good Frenchman, but rather a Venetian.” He is, therefore, to dissuade Amboise from this course—as also because Giuliano is opposed to Ercole himself in the matter of Cento and Pieve (which the Duke was still trying to get separated from the diocese of Bologna). But “in the case that your Lordship should see that the lot has to fall to him, and that your vote could not prevent it, we should praise you if you could give what you could not sell, that is, if you should gratify him by voting for him.” But he must first speak with the Cardinal of Rouen, and be guided by his wishes and intentions.¹

¹ *Minute* of October 23, 1503. Archivio di Modena, *Minutario*

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Ippolito, however, had but one course open to him. The conclave was the shortest in the whole history of the Papacy. On the very day that it opened, October 31, Giuliano della Rovere was practically unanimously elected Pope, and took the title of Julius II. By magnanimous promises (which, as we shall see, he did not keep), he had bought the support of Cesare Borgia, who commanded the votes of the Spanish Cardinals, and the election, though less scandalously conducted, was hardly less simoniacal than had been that of Giuliano's hated enemy, Alexander VI.¹ Ippolito had given his vote with such grace and dexterity, that all parties had been pleased, and his father was greatly delighted with his entire conduct in this emergency. "We could not have felt greater satisfaction," he writes, "and we think that your Lordship has this time shown the good talent and dexterity that you have. We commend you, and, if our interests were not yours, and yours ours, we should thank you."²

The newly created Pontiff received Ippolito's first act of homage with much graciousness, and declared that he had always been a staunch friend to the Estensi. He professed special anxiety to see his godson, Don Ferrando, who had indeed started from Ferrara for Rome with a few horsemen

Cronologico. The next day, Ercole sent an urgent message, post-haste, to Ippolito, bidding him by all means go to the conclave, "especially as the Cardinal of Rouen urges you to this," and carry out the instructions in his former letter. Letter of October 24. *Ibid.*, *Carteggio dei Principi.* Outside, to encourage the couriers, a gallows is drawn, with the suggestive words *sub poena furcarum, cito—cito—cito.*

¹ See Pastor, iii. pp. 520-522.

² Letter of November 5, 1503. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi.*

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as soon as the news of the election had reached him. The official Ferrarese embassy, to join with Beltrando Costabili, the ordinary ambassador at the Papal Court, in presenting the Duke's congratulations, arrived a little later ; it included Gian Luca Pozzi, Antonio Costabili, and Giovanni Francesco Maria Rangoni.

The Venetians had taken advantage of Cesare's broken fortunes to occupy as many towns in Romagna as they could lay hands on, under the plea of liberating these places from the tyranny of the Borgia ; " with great offence to God," as the Pope put it, " and injury to us and to this Holy See." Fano, Faenza and Rimini surrendered to their forces in succession, while Cesare's agents still held Forlimpopoli and the citadels of Bertinoro, Forlì and Cesena. The Pope remonstrated with the Venetian ambassador, Antonio Giustinian, insisting that all those places must be restored to the Church ; in a strongly-worded letter to the Doge, Leonardo Loredan, he declared that nothing could make him swerve from this resolution, and that no composition was possible.¹ When Cesare refused to surrender what was left to him, he had him arrested and brought to Rome as a prisoner. Julius at first appears to have thought of handing him over to Ercole, to be kept at Ferrara until he had the citadels in his hands. But Ercole gave an evasive answer, said that he must first know what he would have to do if the Valentino did not yield up the fortresses in accordance with his promise—his real motive being, according to the Venetian ambassador, that he wished to delay his decision until he could hear from the King of France and be guided

¹ Giustinian, *Dispacci*, ii. pp. 285, 288-292 ; Brief of January 10, 1504, *Archivio Vaticano*, xxxix. 22, ff. 7v, 8.

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by his Majesty's wishes in the matter.¹ Julius then imprisoned the fallen terror in the Borgia Tower, in the very rooms in which he had murdered Alfonso of Bisceglie, and only released him on the condition that the citadels in question should be surrendered within forty days. By March, all had been recovered, excepting that of Forlì, where the castellano—in secret understanding with Cesare—still flaunted the banner of the Borgia Bull, imperturbable alike to papal threats and proffered papal bribes. The Venetians and the last descendant of the former rulers of the place, Lodovico degli Ordelaffi, were likewise treating with him, each trying to outbid the other in their attempts to purchase the citadel.² Peaceable measures being unavailing, Julius demanded artillery from Ercole, and announced his intention of taking the rebellious fortress by storm.

May saw the close of Cesare's career in Italy. On his release from Rome he had gone to Naples, which had by now fallen into the hands of the Spaniards, with a safe conduct from Gonsalvo de Cordova, the great captain. There, at the Pope's instigation, he was made a prisoner. In a brief to Gonsalvo, dated May 11, 1504, the Pope, hearing that Cesare has been sending money to the castellano of Forlì, whom he had secretly exhorted not to restore the fortress, and that the latter "has begun to bombard our city of Forlì with his artillery, and does not cease from acclaiming the name of the

¹ Giustinian, *loc. cit.*, ii. pp. 364, 366, 378.

² "It is grievous to us to buy this citadel which is ours," wrote the Pope on March 9 to his commissaries, the Archbishop of Ragusa and Pietro Paolo de Callio, "but we think that lighter than to allow it to pass into the hands of others. Wherefore, if it cannot be done otherwise, you may promise him in our name 15,000 golden ducats." *Archivio Vaticano*, xxxix. 22, f. 30.

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Duke in contempt and hatred of us," urges him "so to confine and coerce the Duke, who has been received under thy protection, that he may be unable to compass anything against our state and that of the Holy Roman Church," and to force him to have the citadel surrendered without any excuse or delay, "for it lies in the will and power of the Duke."¹

For a while the castellano proved obdurate. Ercole himself now interposed, urging him to yield; but the man professed himself sceptical as to Cesare's captivity, and made difficulties about surrendering into Ercole's hands. Duke Guidobaldo advanced with the papal troops, and at length in August, by Ercole's intervention, backed up by an order from Cesare (extorted by Gonsalvo with a promise of his liberation), the citadel was surrendered to the papal authorities.² In spite of Gonsalvo's pledge, the Borgia was sent as a prisoner to Spain. Lucrezia was wild with apprehension for her brother's safety, fearing even for his life. "Be of good heart," wrote Ercole to her, "for even as we love you sincerely and with every tenderness of heart as our daughter, so shall we never fail him, and we wish to be to him a good father and good brother in everything." But he could only give her vague expectations, and bid her "hope

¹ Brief to Gonsalvo de Cordova, May 11, 1504. *Archivio Vaticano* xxxix. 22, ff. 51v, 52. In part published by Pastor, iii. doc. 69.

² In a brief to Ercole, of June 19, the Pope thanks him for what he is doing, and expresses his astonishment that the castellano does not believe his (Ercole's) assertion concerning the arrest of Cesare; he says that Gonsalvo will send a man to Forlì to order him to surrender, in the name of the King and Queen of Spain, and urges Ercole to continue what he has begun, so that the said citadel may be restored to the Church through him. *Archivio Vaticano*, xxxix. 22, f. 100.

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in our Lord God who does not abandon whoso trusts in Him.”¹

Things had not hitherto run quite smoothly between the Duke of Ferrara and the new Pontiff. The concessions made to the former by Pope Alexander, on the occasion of Lucrezia's marriage, were only recognized under protest by the Roman Curia. Ercole had still to labour to get the complete cession of Cento and La Pieve, with the separation of these places from the diocese of Bologna, confirmed. When on the vigil of the Feast of the Apostles, June 28, 1504—the first occasion since the death of Alexander—Beltrando Costabili went at the hour of vespers to the Camera Apostolica, to present the hundred gold ducats of the tribute and demand the receipt, he had a bad reception from the Cardinal Camarlingo and the other papal officials. The Fiscal Procurator said that the Duke was wont to pay 4,150 ducats as tribute, and professed to know nothing about the reduction to one hundred. Costabili answered that the Duke had the reduction granted by a very full apostolical Bull, and showed the receipt for last year's tribute, which he had brought with him. The Auditor of the Camera, “who is a terrible man,” wanted to see it, and then, turning to the Camarlingo, made some frivolous objections to its validity. Finally, however, the Cardinal accepted the money under protest, “without prejudice of the Camera Apostolica,” as the reduction had not been confirmed by the Pope.² Julius had even suspected that Ercole was favouring Lodovico degli Ordelaffi in his

¹ *Minute Ducali* of October 20 (year illegible, but presumably 1504). Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*.

² Dispatches of B. Costabili to Ercole, June 28 and August 4, 1504. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio degli Ambasciatori—Roma*.

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designs upon Forlì.¹ But the Duke's good offices in getting the obstinate citadel surrendered to the papal forces, and his promises of artillery and ammunition to the Duke of Urbino, completely changed the situation, and the Pope expressed his warmest gratitude. "Write to his Excellence," he said to Monsignor Beltrando, "that we are obliged to him, and that, should the chance arise, we shall do the same for him. Others, indeed, have promised to do things and have said words ; but his Excellence has both said and done. Right glad are we that this occasion has arisen, to let us know upon whom we can rely in our needs."²

The chief dramatic novelty of this year in Ferrara had been the *Jacob et Joseph*, which had been written for the purpose by Pandolfo Collenuccio. It was played in Lent, on the Thursday in Passion Week and on Palm Sunday, in the Duomo, with unusually elaborate mountings and with a representation of Paradise in which the ducal choristers filled the parts of Angels.³ This was Pandolfo's last achievement. The restored Giovanni Sforza (whose natural subject he was) regarded him as a traitor for his adherence

¹ Hearing that Giovanni Francesco Maria Rangoni had gone to Forlì and offered financial assistance to the Ordelaffi, the Pope had sent a strongly-worded brief to Ercole, bidding him clear himself from the suspicion—which, said his Holiness, everybody but himself entertained—that he was privy to the transaction, by recalling Rangoni at once, and either not allow him to give the money to Lodovico or, if given, make him take it back as soon as possible. He followed it up by a furious order to Rangoni himself to leave Forlì instantly. Briefs of March 12 and 18, 1504. *Archivio Vaticano*, xxxix. 22, ff. 31v, 32. Lodovico died at Ravenna at the end of May ; he was a bastard brother of that Antonio Maria degli Ordelaffi whom Ercole had befriended in the days of Sixtus IV.

² Dispatch of B. Costabili to Ercole, August 20, 1504. *Archivio di Modena, Carteggio degli Ambasciatori—Roma*.

³ Zambotto, f. 400 ; Gaspari, ii. part i. p. 205.

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to Cesare Borgia. In July, he lured him to Pesaro ; and, on the plea that Pandolfo had slandered him in order to curry favour with the Borgia, in spite of the intervention of the Marquis of Mantua, he had him cruelly and perfidiously strangled.

Since the accession of Pope Julius, Ercole had grown dissatisfied with the conduct of the Cardinal Ippolito. He considered that his son was neglecting his interests at the Papal Court, and, in December, had written him a strongly-worded letter of rebuke. Things grew more serious in the spring, when Ippolito was at Ferrara. A messenger from Rome penetrated into the Cardinal's room, to deliver a papal brief or admonition concerning the surrendering of certain benefices which the Pope had conferred upon one of his favourites ; Ippolito was furious, and had the unfortunate messenger soundly beaten. The Duke ordered him instantly to write to Rome and apologize, under pain of banishment from his duchies. The Cardinal haughtily refused, and, on April 9, left Ferrara and fled to Mantua. The next day, Ercole sent a letter after him. He had heard, he said, that he talked of going to Spain. If he really means this, "as we look more to your interests than at your conduct towards us," he reminds him that he must pay his respects to the King of France on the way ; otherwise, he will run great risk of losing his archbishopric of Milan (which Ippolito still held in addition to the see of Ferrara), as the King will think himself slighted. "After that, you can go to Spain or wherever you like." The Cardinal is to answer by the same messenger, as to what he intends to do in the matter.¹

In answer to this, Ercole got a letter in Ippolito's own

¹ *Minute Ducali* of April 10, 1504. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*. Cf. Zambotto, f. 400v.

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hand, and "full of insolence," as he said. The Cardinal begins by declaring that he had intended to hold no further communications with his father. It was most presumptuous of those persons who had spoken of his intention of going to Spain. He thanks the Duke for his suggestion about going first to the Court of the Most Christian King, but, not having made up his mind, he cannot for the present give him a definite answer. "I am greatly astonished that in this matter your Excellence has made a show of caring for my interests, if not for my honour (which is a thing of much greater importance than seven churches of Milan); whereas you have done your best to make every manifestation of the opposite. As to what you say concerning my bearing towards you, I say that—as any one, who wishes to judge this without passion, can see clearly and perceive the effects—it has always been good, and typical of a good son. In everything that has happened, I have always postponed my own private advantage for your service and benefit." He complains bitterly of the Duke's injustice in thus banishing him from his State. "Although you could have accomplished what you wanted, without doing me shame and damage, you have sought my dishonour with as much diligence as though you were going to gain a State for yourself, not taking into consideration who it is that you are treating in this way and for what cause. You do not care for what every one will say who shall hear this, nor for the bad example that you have given your successors, to treat their sons and brothers in the same fashion for every trivial difference and trumpety disagreement. If this thing were done in the future, it could easily result in the total ruin of the State; which, however, would be caused only by the example that in your time you have given. Since

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it is your desire that I should never see you again, I will satisfy your wish nor offend your eyes in any way ; for you have made me of such a nature that I should not desire to go into the presence of Christ, unless I hoped to be welcomed by Him." Let his Excellence take care of his health, and forgive him if, in his own defence, he is compelled to tell the whole truth about their quarrel, wherever he goes. "With all my power, I pray you to deign to give me your blessing for this my journey."¹

"In the first line of your letter," wrote the Duke in reply, "you say that, in spite of what you had resolved, you have written. Verily, it seems to us that the beginning of your letter corresponds with the rest, and that you wish to show us at the outset your bad will. We know not which would be worse, to have written to us in the way you have or not to have deigned to answer us." "We are astonished at these impertinent words of yours. The favour that we asked of you, to write to Rome, was not in the least against your honour. Nay, we should have believed that, not merely in a tiny thing like this was, but if we had urged you to renounce this bishopric of Ferrara, you would have done it to please us, right willingly." It is not true that he has behaved like a good son. "Excepting the vote that you gave to the Holiness of the Pope, with the will of the most reverend Cardinal of Rouen, which was well done, you have never satisfied us in anything of importance. And if, indeed, it seemed that you began to favour our interests in Cento and La Pieve, you then suddenly departed from Rome, without our leave, and in spite of the need of those affairs of ours." Ippolito has always been retrograde to

¹ Autograph letter of the Cardinal Ippolito, dated Mantua, April 12, 1504. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*.

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his wishes, although Ercole has got him the cardinalate and almost all the benefices that he has. "Since you have been disobedient and ungrateful towards us, you need not wonder that we have dismissed you from our State ; because, bearing yourself towards us as you do, we do not think that you are worthy to be near us. As to your saying that, by our treatment of you, we have given a bad example to our successors, and that from such a thing the ruin of the State could follow : we say that we are, nevertheless, content to have done this, and that it should pass as an example for our successors—for those of them, at least, who have sons that are not obedient." "We know not how it befits a Cardinal to say that you would not desire to go into the presence of Christ, unless you hoped to be welcomed by Him. But we understand that you wish to behave towards our Lord God as you do towards us, and towards the others in this world. You do evil to take Christ's name in vain, with small reverence and with such haughtiness as you do." As to his threat of speaking out, let him tell the truth wherever he goes, and every one will judge that he is in the wrong. "As to our benediction, which in the end you pray us to give you for this journey of yours, we tell you that we do not deny it you ; nay, we give it to you willingly, and we would that it had the power to make you bring forth good fruit. But, since virtue cannot operate well in things that are ill disposed, we know not what effect it can have upon you—although we would that it were good. And we fear that our Lord God, since you do not reverence His Majesty and are disobedient to your father, will give you some fitting chastisement, although we should be very sorry for it."¹

¹ *Minute Ducali* of April 14, 1504. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei*

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But the storm soon subsided. On Sunday, April 14, (the very day on which Ercole was dictating this letter), the Marquis of Mantua arrived unexpectedly at the palace at the hour of Mass. He had come down the Po in a gondola with twelve oars, to reconcile the Cardinal with the Duke, in which he succeeded without difficulty. Ippolito returned to Ferrara, and the festivities for the feast of San Giorgio passed off with exceptional success. The horse-race was run in the presence of the Duke, the Marquis and the Marchesana Isabella, the *palio* being given to the latter, one of whose horses had come in first, "with very great gladness of the people; and after dinner were recited comedies."¹ This was the last festivity and entertainment of Duke Ercole's reign.

In this April, before their father's reconciliation with Ippolito, Don Alfonso had started upon a tour, accompanied by Antonio Costabili and others, to make acquaintance with various European sovereigns. From Paris he went to Brussels, where he met the future Emperor Charles, and thence he came to England and was kindly received by our Henry VII.² On his return to France, an urgent summons reached him to hasten back to Italy, for that his father was dying. In the light of future events, the entry in Sanudo's

Principi. The reader by this time will have had enough of Ercole's correspondence with his sons, but I have printed another letter from the Modena Archives in Appendix II., document 15, written at an earlier date to Ippolito on the duties of a Cardinal, because of the instructive contrast that it affords with the famous advice of Lorenzo de' Medici to the young Cardinal Giovanni.

¹ Zambotto, f. 400v.

² "From an English courtier, who had been informed of it by letters of the 15th of the past month from England, I hear that the most illustrious Don Alfonso has been much caressed and honoured in England by that most serene King." Dispatch of Beltrando Costabili of August 4, 1504. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio degli Ambasciatori—Roma*.

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Diary for June 7 reads ominously : " From Ferrara the news comes that the Duke is ill ; Don Alfonso is in France and is going to England, so that a messenger has been sent after him for him to return, because his father is in great danger ; and if at his death he should not be found in Ferrara, the second brother, Don Ferrando, who is loved by the people, could be made Lord." Similarly, Zambotto tells us that Alfonso hurried back, " thinking that he was in danger of not succeeding to the lordship of Ferrara, if his father died in his absence, although he had been already invested by Pope Alexander VI with the duchy and its dominion ; nevertheless, he hoped in the people who loved him." ¹ Zambotto, it will be observed, gives no hint as to which of the brothers it was from whom the opposition should come. There was much discussion in the Papal Court as to the future of Ferrara. " This morning," wrote Antonio Giustinian to the Doge of Venice, on June 29, " it was said that there were letters from Ferrara that the Lord Duke had had a return of his malady and was in great danger of his life. As to what will happen in the event of his death, various judgments are passed, and all conclude that there must be great dissensions among his sons, and that the absence of Don Alfonso will be greatly to his disadvantage, since the Cardinal, who is popular with the people, is in Ferrara. But they all seem to be not a little jealous of your Celsitude, whose conduct is watched more than ever, since all think that you are aspiring to the monarchy of Italy." ²

Ippolito ruled the State while Ercole, devout to the last, had himself conveyed to Florence in a litter drawn by

¹ Sanudo, *Diarii*, vi. col. 30 ; Zambotto, f. 402v.

² Giustinian, *Dispacci*, iii. p. 162.

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friar should be commanded by a brief from the Pope, if he refuse. "For this good work we shall be as much obliged to your most reverend Lordship as for any other thing which at present we could receive from you, because, since that Frate Egidio is of the learning and sufficiency that he is, we cannot but hope that all those good fruits will follow that are desired."¹ But the Duke himself was not to see this Lent.

Both Venice and Rome were on the alert. On December 7, the Venetians heard that Ercole was at the point of death, and that Don Alfonso had sent to tell the Visdomino, Ser Alvise da Mula, "that he recommended himself to our Signoria and wished to be its good son." The Pope, understanding the Duke's critical condition and mistrusting the intentions of the Republic, used "strange words" (the recognized euphemism of the epoch for undiplomatical language), and talked of sending the Cardinal of Volterra (Soderini) to Ferrara, as legate. To this, however, Beltrando Costabili objected, and used all his powers of persuasion with different Cardinals to prevent, or at least to delay it, until he could hear from Alfonso.² A most amazing story was sent by Giustinian from Rome to Venice to the effect that the chief reason for which Julius intended to send a legate to Ferrara, in case of Ercole's death, was that the Cardinal Ippolito had promised to keep the duchy loyal to the Pope, if the latter helped him to become Lord of it instead of Alfonso, whom he represented as entirely Venetian in his sympathies and as having pledged himself to complete

¹ *Minute Ducali* of November 16, 1504. Archivio di Modena, *Minutario Cronologico*.

² Sanudo, *op. cit.*, vi. coll. 110, 114. Giustinian, Dispatch of December 9, *Dispacci*, iii. p. 330.

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subordination to Venice. It was asserted that the Cardinal felt himself strong in the affection of the people and was in good understanding with Don Ferrando ; if the thing came off, he would lay down his red hat and marry the daughter of his Holiness.¹ This must have been the merest canard, for it would rather seem that Ippolito had been completely reconciled to his brother. Nevertheless, the proposed coming of the legate made Alfonso uneasy, and he bade the ambassador do his best to prevent it :—

“ Messer Beltrando. We have seen and right well noted all that you tell us in your letters, about the decision that the Holiness of our Lord had taken to send hither the most reverend Cardinal of Volterra, in the case of the death of the Lord our Father. In reply, we tell you that, in this case, we would have the Pope, as a demonstration of the love that we know he bears us, do only as much as we shall request from his Beatitude, and nothing beyond. Wherefore we wish you, if you hear at any time in the future that he is thinking of sending us the said most reverend Monsignor or another, to do your best to prevent his Holiness from sending any one. We do not think that he ought to send a legate here, unless we demand it, especially as we see no obvious need of one ; so, as you are on the spot and understand that this is our will, you will strive that it be done as we have said. Do not believe that we are led to this thought and determination in order to escape the expense which we should incur through the coming hither of a legate, or to oppose the will that our Lord has to honour and protect us,

¹ Dispatch of December 13, 1504. *Dispacci*, iii. p. 334. The daughter in question is the famous Madonna Felice della Rovere. The thing, adds the writer, is being kept a strict secret by the Pope, and will not be disclosed at all, unless there is a further change in the state of affairs.

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the which we hold more dear than our own soul. But know that infinite and important considerations move us to this ; and if we made them known to you by another way than by letters, you yourself would urge us to act in like manner. Ferrara, January 20, 1505.~ Alfonso.”¹

Five days later, on January 25, 1505, Duke Ercole d' Este, the man who, in spite of many unworthy deeds, had truly striven to tread in the paths upon which the beacon-light of the martyred Fra Girolamo had shone, passed away peacefully in the Castello Vecchio.

His last Will and Testament is still preserved in the Archives of Modena.² It is a noteworthy document, illustrating both the mystical side of his character and his relations with his children. It begins : “ Even as our Lord Jesus Christ before He suffered called His disciples together and founded a new Testament, in which He made us His children His heirs ; so hath He set us an example, that in imitation of Him, before we pass out of this present world, we should make a disposition of those things which we would have done after our death. Therefore should each one look to it that, before the hour of death overtake him, he so dispose of himself and his possessions that after his death he may be seen to have done all things prudently.” He commends his soul to God's mercy, his body to be buried at Santa Maria degli Angeli, before the high altar of the new church. To each of a number of monasteries and religious bodies, he leaves one hundred *lire marchesane* annually in perpetuity, with minute instructions concerning monthly Masses in

¹ *Minute Ducali per Roma a Beltrando Costabili*. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio degli Ambasciatori—Roma*.

² *Cancelleria Ducale, Documenti spettanti a Principi Estensi*. I take this opportunity of thanking Dr. Giulio Bertoni for calling my attention to this document.

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perpetuity for his soul, the legacies to be paid immediately after his death and afterwards at the beginning of each year: "in order that the soul of the testator may more swiftly feel their suffrages, and more easily be delivered from the pains of Purgatory." Moreover, he leaves another hundred *lire marchesane* to the "chaplains and college of the chaplains of the Cathedral of Ferrara," in order that, in addition to the obligation of saying the above Masses, they may be bound every Saturday, in perpetuity, in the morning to say and celebrate a solemn Mass in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and in the evening to sing the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin before the Lady-altar of the Cathedral.¹ Then follow the legacies to his sons. To Ippolito, he simply leaves four cardinal's rochets, considering that he is sufficiently provided for, "by so many benefices which he possesses and holds." To Ferrando, besides the palace near San Francesco (the present Palazzo Pareschi) in which he is living, he leaves a number of possessions in the Ferrarese and Modenese and in the district of Carpi, the annual income from which together amounts to 14,992 *lire marchesane*; in addition to this, Don Alfonso is to give him an annual salary and provision of 3,000 *lire marchesane*, "so long as he follows the Court, and remains in obedience and devotion to that most illustrious Don Alfonso." To the younger Sigismondo, besides the Palazzo Schifanoia in which he lives at present, with all that it contains, he leaves a number of possessions and customs, more especially in Romagna, amounting to an annual income of some 11,000 *lire marchesane*, and the additional 3,000

¹ The whole of these pious bequests comes to 1,200 *lire marchesane* a year. In 1504, the *lira marchesana* was a sum of money equivalent to about 10 *lire* of modern Italian coinage.

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from Don Alfonso under the same conditions as in the case of Don Ferrando. Small legacies in kind are left to Isabella d' Este Gonzaga, who has her dowry, and similarly to his grandsons, Maximilian and Francesco Sforza, who have the dowry of their mother Beatrice. Don Giulio is to have the palace in the Via degli Angeli which he inhabits, various possessions and customs bringing in an annual income of 4,500 *lire marchesane*, and an additional 1,000 as salary and provision from Don Alfonso, under the same conditions as Ferrando. No mention is made of Lucrezia d'Este Bentivoglio. Don Alfonso is made universal heir and successor in all the rest, and in all the State and Dominion. The Testament is drawn up by the Duke's secretary, the notary Lodovico Bonamelli, in the convent of Santa Caterina da Siena, on July 1, 1504, and witnessed by "Maestro Giovanni da Tabia, prior of the convent of the Friars of Santa Maria degli Angeli of the city of Ferrara and confessor of the Lord testator," Fra Cristoforo da Viterbo and five other friars of the Angeli, Dominicans of the Observance, "called and specially requested as witnesses, by word of mouth of the most illustrious Lord our Duke, the testator aforesaid."

It is not too much to say that, of all the Italian sovereigns in the epoch of the Borgia, Ercole d' Este is the one sympathetic, almost the only not ignoble figure. Two great blots rest upon his reputation : his cruel and unworthy conduct towards his nephew, Niccolò di Leonello ; his treason to Italy in abetting the disastrous policy of Lodovico Sforza which brought the French invaders into the country. The first, in any other of the contemporary sovereigns, might be excused on the plea of the political morality of the age ; but not so in the case of Ercole, who professed a higher code

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of morals and undoubtedly held higher ideals. In palliation of the second might be urged the lack of genuine national sentiment among the Italians of the early Renaissance; but, at the best, it was treason, and as treason all the more enlightened spirits even of that age stigmatized it. Ercole's religious fervour was intense and genuine; to the best of his abilities, he strove to follow where the light of the truth seemed to shine. Want of moral courage and a certain spirit of time-serving kept him back from the heights. He loved his people, and was, on the whole, a good lord to his subjects; the faults of his administration were many and grievous, but they were due more to the general condition of the times, and to the low and sordid conception then prevalent as to the art of government and the duties of a sovereign, than to any lack of noble qualities of heart and mind.

Ercole must be regarded as the maker of modern Ferrara. "The Duke desires nothing else," writes a discontented contemporary and subject, "save every day to decorate and magnify this his city of Ferrara with new edifices and palaces."¹ He was much concerned in draining and fertilising the country, and undertook considerable public works in this direction in 1486 and subsequent years. In the adorning and embellishing of the capital, Pietro di Benvenuto—who had, it will be remembered, finished the Schifanoia for Borso—appears to have been the principal architect employed in the earlier part of his reign; it was he who adapted the Castello Vecchio for a ducal residence, and to him is due the marble stairway, still standing, of the Corte Vecchia. After his death in 1483, the Duke

¹ Document quoted by Frizzi, iv. p. 148.

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chiefly relied upon the services of Bartolommeo Tristano and of Biagio Rossetti. Under the latter's direction, in 1492, Ercole began the great work that gave Ferrara the magnificent aspect that it still retains even in its desolation : the enlargement of the city and especially the addition of a new district on the northern side, known as the *Addizione Erculea* or *Terra Nova*. Ferrara was practically doubled. The smaller Barco, Belfiore, the Certosa and Santa Maria degli Angeli were included in the new walls—those splendid Herculean ramparts along which the modern traveller loves to wander hour by hour. Broad new streets were laid down, such as the Corso di Porta Po and its prolongation, the Corso di Porta Mare, that seem so deserted to-day, and the Strada del Borgo Leone. The Strada degli Angeli acquired fresh importance, while the trench and moat of the old city-walls became the Strada della Giuvecca, still one of the few animated streets of the modern city.¹ Within this new quarter magnificent palaces began to rise, as the nobles and courtiers threw themselves into their sovereign's scheme. Sigismondo d' Este, the Duke's brother, had the Palazzo de' Diamanti begun by Rossetti in 1492 or 1493, to be finished later by Girolamo Pasini and Cristoforo Borgognoni, upon the façade of which the marble diamonds still recall the Herculean badge ; while Francesco da Castello, the chief physician of the Court, had a hardly less noble palace reared by its side, the present Palazzo Sacrati.

¹ Cf. Frizzi, iv. pp. 165-168, and especially the map by Borgatti in Solerti, *Ferrara e la Corte Estense*. The Ferrarese Diarist describes the beginning of the new walls, under August 19, 1492 : "and the Venetians, hearing this, sent to Duke Ercole to know why he was making those excavations ; and he answered them that he wanted to enlarge Ferrara." Cf. Il Pistoia, Sonnet 363, *Ercole al suo mantello aggiunge panno*.

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All the landowners of the duchy were compelled to send contadini to labour on the walls and the laying out of the new district ; a special tax was levied upon all the Ferrarese territory ; the salaries of the servants of the Court and the stipends of the professors of the Studio were reduced, to find funds.¹ The building of this Herculean quarter was completed about the year 1501. In the centre of his creation the Duke desired to raise an equestrian statue of himself, and he attempted to obtain from Milan, which had by then fallen into the hands of the French, the model which Leonardo da Vinci had made in 1493 for the monument of Francesco Sforza. In this he was unsuccessful.² The work was never executed, and, upon the column which the Duke had prepared for himself, stands now—not unfittingly—the statue of the great poet who was to be the supreme glory of Ferrara.

Many of the works that Rossetti carried out for his ducal patron have perished. But there still stands San Francesco, the most noteworthy ecclesiastical building of the early

¹ Frizzi, iv. p. 166.

² On September 19, 1501, Ercole wrote to Giovanni Valla, his ambassador in Milan, that the master who was to have made the model of the horse to be cast in metal to be put up in the piazza of *Terra Nova* had died, and no one here could finish it. Remembering that in Milan there is the model made of a horse that the Lord Lodovico had in mind to have cast, "which model was made by a Master Leonardo, who is a good master in things of this kind," as it is not being used and is getting more spoilt every day by neglect, he bids him ask the Cardinal of Rouen for it. On September 24, Valla answered that the Cardinal would be delighted to let the Duke have it ; but that, since the King has seen it, he cannot give it without a word to his Majesty. Valla advises the Duke to instruct Bartolommeo de' Cavallieri to speak to the King about it. G. Campori, *Nuovi documenti per la vita di Leonardo da Vinci* (Modena, 1865), pp. 6, 7.

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Renaissance in Ferrara, with its tasteful red-brick façade, which he began in 1494; the church of Santa Maria in Vado, one of the oldest and most revered sanctuaries of the duchy with its chapel of the Miraculous Host, was rebuilt by him a little later (from the designs of Ercole Grandi), but has been entirely reconstructed since; and the campanile of San Giorgio is his. The reconstruction of the choir of the Duomo, also, is Rossetti's work. His, too, is the most beautiful private palace in Ferrara, unfinished and now abandoned to squalid poverty, the Palazzo Costabili—now more usually called the Palazzo Calcagnini—in which Lodovico il Moro once hoped to find a peaceful refuge in the approaching ruin of his State. Other architects reared for Ercole the princely palace near San Francesco, completed the Certosa, began the church of San Benedetto. There was, indeed, hardly a church or convent in the city that the Duke did not enlarge or rebuild.

The decoration of these new buildings and of others that former princes had reared, the painting of presentation portraits of members of the reigning House on occasions of marriages and betrothals, the scenic decorations of the ducal theatre, afforded occupation to a vast number of artists and craftsmen, great and small. In the earlier part of Ercole's reign, the prince of Court painters was still Cosimo Tura, as in the days of Borso. Shortly before his marriage, Ercole commissioned him to paint portraits of himself and (amazing example of the taste and sentiment of that age in these matters) his illegitimate daughter Lucrezia, to send as presents to his bride Leonora.¹ Tura likewise designed the nuptial bed for the happy occasion,

¹ A. Venturi, *L'Arte Ferrarese nel periodo di Ercole I.*, ii. p. 355.

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with its canopy and coverings, and a wonderful silver side-board. He painted a Madonna for the Duke's private apartment in 1475. A few years later, he decorated his study with seven panels representing naked women, *figure nude di femmine*, probably intended for the three theological and four cardinal virtues.¹ He painted the little Alfonso's portrait to send to the Duchess Bona in 1477, and, later on, those of the princesses, Lucrezia, Isabella and Beatrice, to be sent to their future husbands. He died in 1495. It is doubtful if a single work that Tura painted for Ercole has survived, and if there still exist any authentic portraits (save those executed for Borso in the Schifanoia) from his hand. The same applies to Baldassare d' Este, who lived through the greater part of Ercole's reign; all that he produced during this epoch has perished, with the doubtful exception of one medal.

To Cosimo Tura as chief Court painter succeeded his pupil, Ercole de' Roberti, a member of that noble Reggian family that had given a mistress to the Marchese Niccolò III and a mother to Rinaldo and Bianca Maria. Born some time after 1450, his earlier work appears to have been done at Bologna, and it is to this epoch that his most important extant picture belongs: the Madonna with Pietro degli Onesti, painted for a church at Ravenna and now in the Brera at Milan. He took Cosimo Tura's place at Ferrara in 1487. A little later he visited Venice, and learned to temper the harsh style of his master with the softer influence of the young Giambellino. He was the leading artist in the festivities for the marriage of Isabella d' Este, painting the chests that were to convey her belongings to Mantua,

¹ Venturi, *op. cit.*, ii. pp. 362, 363.

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designing and directing the construction of the nuptial bed and of the triumphal chariot upon which she entered her husband's city. We have seen him accompany Alfonso to Rome on the accession of Alexander VI. At the time of Roberti's death in 1496, he was engaged upon a portrait of the Duke for Isabella, which was sent unfinished to Mantua. Very few of his works have been preserved, but the National Gallery possesses a most beautiful example of his later style in the "Gathering of Manna in the Desert," from the Dudley collection.

Lorenzo Costa, the connecting link between Ferrara and Bologna in painting, although a thorough Ferrarese, was but little employed by Duke Ercole—to whom, one would have thought, such works as those mystical altarpieces with which he filled the churches of Bologna should have strongly appealed. What would not the modern student of Ferrara give for some pictured allegory of the Herculean circle, analogous to that painting of her Court with which Costa adorned the studio of the Marchesana Isabella and which is now one of the treasures of the Louvre? The most important work of Costa's chief pupil or follower, Ercole di Giulio Cesare Grandi, is to be found in the frescoed ceilings of the Palazzo Costabili, which do not belong to Ercole's reign. With him and Lodovico Mazzolino begins a new generation of Ferrarese painters, which lies outside the scope of the present work. But already, though no extant picture of his can be assigned to a date earlier than some five years after Ercole's death, the one great master of Ferrarese painting, Giovanni Luteri known as Dosso Dossi, had been born.

Not a trace of the Duke's favourite foundation, the convent of Santa Caterina da Siena, remains to-day, though



Two Ferrarese Ladies.

By Ercole Grandi.

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we can still trace its site on the northern side of the Via Aria Nuova, the road that once bore the name of St. Catherine. It is uncertain who was the architect whom Ercole employed to give the design of the church and convent; but we have many records of the pictures that adorned it. They almost all referred to the life of the Seraphic Virgin of Siena. The decoration was carried out mainly in the years 1503 and 1504, by Antonio Aleotti, Geminiano di Bongiovanni and Ettore de' Bonacossi, painters of small importance whose works have perished, but of whom the last named is interesting, as he appears to have belonged to the family of Savonarola's mother. Outside the convent was a fresco of St. Catherine receiving the Stigmata, and another of her holding a Crucifix; various scenes from her life, in one of which she was represented as kissing the feet of her Divine Spouse, were represented in *tondi* in the cortile. In Lucia's private loggia were the "Agony in the Garden," the "Madonna inspiring St. Bernard," "St. Jerome in the Desert," while, in another part of the convent, there was a large fresco of St. Catherine taking a number of nuns under her mantle.¹ We have also records, in the account of the ducal expenses, of pictures (no longer extant) specially painted as presents from Ercole to Lucia in 1502; a head of St. John the Baptist, by Francesco de' Maineri of Parma; an altar-piece, by a certain Niccolò of Pisa, representing St. Catherine of Siena with other saints, worshipped by the Duke himself and others of her clients of the time.² There are few of the many lost Ferrarese pictures that the lover of Ercole could not have spared rather than that.

¹ A. Venturi, *op. cit.*, ii. (2) pp. 373-375; Gandini, *Lucrezia Borgia*, pp. 7, 8.

² A. Venturi, *op. cit.*, ii. (2) pp. 385 note 1, 394.

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The death of Ercole involved the downfall of Suora Lucia. There had already been discord in the convent ; a number of the new comers had left, finding the rule too hard, and it is even said that one of the nuns had attempted to stab her. Her absolute power in the house, the favour that the Duke showed her, certain regulations about the wearing of the black veil, all combined to make her envied and disliked. No sooner was the Duke dead, than the envy and malice of these women blazed out. Lucia was accused of artificially renewing the wounds of the Stigmata, which had healed or, at least, become invisible. All the privileges that Pope Alexander had granted her were taken away ; she was deprived of all authority and precedence in the convent, even of the consolation of having her own confessor. She was then not twenty-nine years old. Until the age of sixty-eight—that is, for nearly forty years more—the nuns kept her a close prisoner in the convent, humiliating her in every possible way, treating her as an impostor and criminal. But she bore it all with the utmost humility and patience, comforted still by mystical communications with St. Catherine. She died on November 15, 1544, consoled with celestial visions and pardoning every one. “ Having obtained from the Lord the grace of liberating some souls from the pains of Purgatory,” writes her earliest biographer, “ before she received the most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, she asked for the liberation of the souls of Duke Ercole her benefactor, of one of her uncles and of a brother, the state of whose souls she had first known by special revelation.”¹ When dead, the convent, by a sudden

¹ Giacomo Marcianese, *Narratione*, pp. 216–221, 225. More recent biographers pass over the alleged cause of this persecution of Lucia, nor have we any record as to which of the nuns took part

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revulsion of feeling, acclaimed her as a saint, and to this day her body, strange relic of a stranger time, is venerated in the Cathedral of the city that had seen her its sovereign's Egeria and afterwards a despised captive.

in it. A certain Suora Maria of Parma was made superior, and the majority of the nuns renewed their vows to her.

Chapter XIII

THE POETS OF THE HERCULEAN CIRCLE

THE one supreme poet in the vernacular during Duke Ercole's reign is Matteo Maria Boiardo, whose work we have already considered at some length. His uncle, Tito Vespasiano di Messer Nanni Strozzi, stands first among the poets who sang in the Latin tongue alone, and was an even more prominent figure in the society of the Ferrarese capital. Messer Tito lived in a most sumptuous style, giving lavish entertainments to the Duke, seconding his sovereign's efforts in the restoration of the drama, offering hospitality to foreign potentates on a scale second only to that of the princes of the House of Este themselves. "He was splendid and magnificent," writes his Florentine kinsman, Lorenzo di Filippo Strozzi, "in having comic representations in his house, with royal mountings and banquets, in the presence of the Lord Duke and all the people of Ferrara."¹ Unfortunately, he played a conspicuous part in the administration of the city. Having previously served the Duke as commissary in Romagna and in other smaller posts, he was made Judge of the Twelve Sages in September, 1497, and entered into office "with very great honour and, perhaps, greater than any other had ever done."² Lorenzo Strozzi would have us believe that the Duke appointed him

¹ *Vite degli uomini illustri della Casa Strozzi*, pp. 59, 60.

² *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 347.

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to this office "more for his own advantage than for the benefit of the said Messer Tito," and that "he administered the public affairs with the good will of the people and to the profit of his sovereign." But his Ferrarese contemporaries tell us a very different story. Probably, like many other Ferrarese magnates, he used his official position as a means of amassing wealth, especially in his old age, when his poetical work was practically done. "Messer Tito and his sons," writes the *Diarist* in March, 1500, "are universally detested by every person for their devouring of the people and for their cruel oppression"; and again, a little later: "Messer Tito Strozza is hated by the people worse than the Devil is."¹

By his wife, Domitilla de' Rangoni of Modena, Tito had three sons: Ercole, Guido and the younger Lorenzo. Ercole—who, like his father, latinised their surname from Strozzi to Strozza (on the same principle as Petrarca calling himself Francesco Petrarca instead of Francesco di Petracco)—succeeded him as the chief Latin poet of the Court. Lame from his birth, always over-dressed and perfumed, this scholarly dandy at one time thought of entering the Church. When Lucrezia Borgia came to Ferrara, he attached himself to her service, partly because he hoped to gain a Cardinal's hat through her influence with her father, Pope Alexander.² For the rest, he strove to follow in his father's footsteps, with scantier means at his disposal but no less hated by the people. Of his vernacular poetry, the one great passion that inspired it and, perhaps, led him to his death, something will be said in the next chapter. A selection of the Latin lyrics of father and son was collected

¹ *Diario Ferrarese*, coll. 382, 401.

² Lorenzo Strozzi, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

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and published together in one volume, a few years after the latter's tragic end, by Aldo Manuzio at Venice.

Coupled by Ariosto with Ercole Strozzi as the other chief singer of Lucrezia's praises¹ is a vernacular poet, Antonio Tebaldi, who similarly modified his surname to Tebaldeo. He was born at Ferrara in 1463, and for some time instructed Isabella d'Este in the art of poetry. After her marriage, he left Ferrara and stayed at the Court of the Bentivoglio at Bologna, until, in consequence of his adulatory poetry on the battle of Fornovo, the Gonzaga in 1496 invited him to Mantua, where Isabella showed him much favour. Thence he came back to his native city in 1499, entering first the service of the Cardinal Ippolito and afterwards that of Lucrezia as secretary. A man of loose morals and great personal beauty, he could settle nowhere; he wandered back to Mantua again, whence he was expelled for libelling a rival poet and a lady, and in 1513 went to the Court of Leo X. He lived long enough to be painted by Raphael and to lose all he had in the sack of Rome.² Nevertheless, almost all his poetry belongs to our present epoch, and was written before the end of the fifteenth century.

This poetical work of Tebaldeo consists of sonnets and a number of epistles, *capitoli* and eclogues in *terza rima*. They are partly amorous, partly political. The sonnets

¹ *Orlando Furioso*, xlii. 83.

² For Tebaldeo, see especially Luzio and Renier, *La Cultura e le Relazioni Letterarie di Isabella d'Este Gonzaga*, ii. 2., pp. 193-211; V. Rossi, *Il Quattrocento*, pp. 206, 207; Gaspary, ii., part i., pp. 312-314. My quotations are from the edition of his poems printed at Modena, 1500. The first edition was published (without his consent) by the poet's cousin, Jacopo Tebaldi, in 1498, with a dedication to the Marchesana Isabella (cf. Luzio and Renier, *loc. cit.*, p. 204).

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are especially remarkable for their exaggeration of the traditional conceits of the Petrarchists, whose imagery is materialised often to an absurd degree. The lover's tears become a torrent and cause the floods of the Po; Love riddles him with his darts, until he can use him as his quiver; he needs no mask in carnival time, because his amorous troubles have made him such a walking death that only Love and his lady, Flavia, can recognize him. Flavia's house catches fire, but her beauty inflames the firemen so that they must use the water for themselves. When she slips on the ice on her way to church, an analogous explanation is forthcoming:—

Che non po invidia ? invidia dispersa erra,
 Hor questo cor et hor quello altro speza,
 Nè sol intrar ne gli animanti è aveza,
 Ma in le cose insensate anchor si serra.
 Sendo la neve qua discesa in terra,
 E vedendose vincer di bianchezza
 Da Madonna; disdegno, ira e tristeza
 Aghiazossi per farli ingiuria e guerra;
 E vedendola un giorno andare al tempio,
 Cader la fe: sì che gli mosse un braccio;
 Ma forse il ciel dar vuole a l'altre exempio,
 Che se Madonna ardea sì come io faccio
 Gionta mai non serebbe a tal caso empio,
 Chè, a chi ama, sotto i piè se strugge il ghiaccio.¹

¹ "What cannot envy do? Envy wanders everywhere, breaks now this heart and now that other; nor only into living beings is it wont to enter, but even incloses itself in senseless things.

"The snow, having descended here on earth and seeing itself surpassed by my lady in whiteness, froze with disdain, anger and sorrow, to injure and make war upon her.

"And seeing her one day going to church, it made her fall, so that she sprained her arm; but, perchance, Heaven wished to give an example to the others;

"For if my lady burned as I do, she would never have come to so cruel a plight, for ice is melted beneath the feet of those that love." (Sonnet 101.)

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But at times he can strike a simpler note :—

Simplice avventurata Pastorella,
Che il dì ti stai fra il grege senza cura,
Poi quando l' altra gente il sol ne fura,
Torni a posar ne la tua agreste cella :
Lasso, che spersa in questa parte e in quella,
Senza quiete al giorno e a nocte oscura,
Vassene la mia vita aspera e dura,
Come dal mar percossa navicella.
Tu sol temi del lupo : ma un fer cane
Per te sta vigilante a simil guerra,
Che fa l' insidie sue rimaner vane ;
Et io temo del celo e de la terra,
Contra ho fortuna, amor, le gente humane,
Nè l' arme alcun per mia difesa afferra.¹

Those of his sonnets that refer to other than amorous subjects, though somewhat lacking inspiration, have an undoubted interest for the student of the epoch. Several dealing with the French invasion, speaking plain truths about the cruelties of the Aragonese rulers of Naples that had led to their downfall, lamenting the impotence of Italy and her manifest decline from the glories of ancient Rome, may be taken as reflecting the temper of the Marchese Gian Francesco and the House of Gonzaga. Mediocre as poetry, the following sonnet strikes a true historical note :—

¹ “ Simple, fortunate shepherd girl ! All day thou art among the flock without care, and then, when other folk rob us of the sun, thou returnest to rest in thy rustic hut :

“ Alas, broken up between one place and another, without peace in the day or in the dark night, my hard and bitter life passes, like a ship that is tossed by the sea.

“ Thou fearest only the wolf ; but a fierce dog keeps watch for thee against such war, and makes his snares remain vain.

“ And I fear Heaven and earth ; against me I have fortune, love, the human race ; nor does any one grasp arms in my defence.”
(Sonnet 67.)

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Ne i toi campi non pose il piè sì presto
Hannibal che combatter li convienne,
Nè mai sì afflicta il Barbaro ti tenne
Che al diffender non fusse il tuo cor desto.
Et hor, Italia, onde procede questo,
Che un piccol Gallo che l' altr' ier qui venne
Per ogni nido tuo batte le penne,
Senza mai ritrovarse alcuno infesto?
Ma iusto esser mi par che 'l ciel te abassi,
Che più non fai Camilli o Scipioni,
Ma sol Sardanapalli e Midi e Crassi.
Già una occha tua (se guardi a i tempi buoni)
Scacciar lo puote de i Tarpei sassi;
Hor aquile non pon, serpi e leoni.¹

Another sonnet, condoling with the Marquis for the death of Rodolfo Gonzaga at Fornovo, opens finely:—

Lassa i suspir : chè non convien tal atto
A chi ha de l' arme Italice il governo ;²

but hardly keeps up the strain. He has a whole series about a bust or statue of Beatrice d'Este Sforza by a certain Leone, and a single sonnet, by no means without charm in spite of its quaint conceits, on the death of Don Alfonso's first wife, Anna Sforza d'Este:—

¹ “No sooner did Hannibal set foot in thy fields, than he had to give battle ; nor ever did the Barbarian keep thee so afflicted, but that thy heart was ready for defence.

“And, now, Italy, whence proceeds this, that a little Cock, that came here but yesterday, beats his wings over every nest of thine, without ever meeting a single foe ?

“But it seems to me just that Heaven cast thee down, for thou makest no more Camilli or Scipios, but only such as Sardanapalus and Midas and Crassus.

“Of old a goose of thine (if thou lookest back to the good times) could drive him away from the Tarpeian rock ; now eagles cannot, nor serpents and lions.” (Sonnet 220.)

² “Leave thy sighs ; for such things befit not him who hath the rule of the armies of Italy.” (Sonnet 231.)

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Visto Morte dal Moro chiuso il passo
 A Carlo, che se armava una altra volta,
 De che l' empia expectava preda molta,
 Disse : Impunito mai questo non lasso.
 Nè in polve il scrisse, ma in un duro sasso,
 E cum l' arco a la terra de Hercul volta,
 Anna (fior de' Sforzeschi) hebbe a noi tolta,
 Nè mai sotterra andò corpo sì lasso.
 Chè non sendo del vincer ben sicura
 Morte, quanto era bella Anna, lei fiera
 Tanto sì fe in la pugna e tanto dura.
 Lassare Italia a' Galli men male era ;
 Potea un dì liberarse ; ma Natura
 Far una altra opra tal mai più non spera.¹

Decidedly noteworthy in their way are the epistles and analogous poems that Tebaldeo wrote in *terza rima*. Like his lyrics, they are partly amorous, partly historical in honour of the House of Gonzaga. One is a long *capitolo* on the state of Italy, the corruption of the Church and the ever-increasing peril to Christendom from the Turk after the taking of Negroponte. It ends in a vigorous appeal to Duke Ercole. He is the inheritor of Hercules, "not less in power than in name"; "Italy under thy shadow yet rests a little." To liberate the world from this cruel monster will be a new Herculean labour, and one more worthy than all the others.²

¹ "When Death saw that the Moro had closed the passage to Charles, who was arming himself again (from which that impious one expected much prey), she said : I shall not leave this man unpunished.

"She wrote it not in dust but on a hard stone, and, turning with her bow to the city of Ercole, she has taken from us Anna, flower of the Sforzas ; nor ever under earth went a body so wearied.

"For Death, not being quite sure of her victory, made herself as cruel and relentless in the strife as Anna was beautiful.

"To leave Italy to the Gauls was a lesser evil ; one day she could free herself ; but Nature never hopes again to make another work like this." (Sonnet 254.)

² Capitolo iv. *Per dar riposo a l'affannata mente*. Ercole in-

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Fine too is another, in the form of a letter from the dead Rodolfo Gonzaga to the Marchese Gian Francesco ; the slain hero describes his reception in Hades by the spirits of his brother Federigo and his father Lodovico (father and grandfather, respectively, of the man that he is addressing) ; he urges on his nephew to tread in the paths of Scipio ; let him not mourn for his death, but take care of the little child that he has left.¹ Less effective is a similar piece, written in the name of Gian Francesco himself and describing his exploits at Fornovo, denying that he had entertained any negotiations with the French King.² These poems have value as historical documents, even apart from their literary merits, which are appreciable.

In curious contrast to the courtier Tebaldeo, is another poet, whose poems are practically contemporaneous with his and deal in part with the same cycle of events : Antonio Cammelli, called " Il Pistoia," from the Tuscan city where he was born in 1440. It is not known why or when Cammelli came to Ferrara ; but, from 1487 to 1497, he filled the post of captain of the Porta di Santa Croce at Reggio. A little later he was given the same office again, at the intercession of the Marchesana Isabella ; but he seems to have lost it once more, and from 1500 until his death, in 1502, he wandered about in poverty from Court to Court.

In the Lent of 1499, a tragedy by Cammelli was played

structured Beltrando Costabil to exhort Pope Alexander to take more effectual measures against the Turks and excite the other Powers to do the like, " considering the great danger in which the Christian Religion is placed." Archivio di Modena, *Minutario Cronologico*, February 24, 1502.

¹ Capitolo xii. *Se poi che l' alma già disciolta e scarca.*

² Capitolo xiii. *Chi disse esser felice chi non nasce.*

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before the Court of Ferrara : *Filostrato e Pamfila*.¹ The argument is spoken by a mysterious pilgrim, who announces himself as the ghost of Seneca : " I am the spirit of that moral philosopher, whose body Nero made die before its normal time, sent by Pluto to explain to you an amorous case of two lovers described by me in my youth." As a matter of fact, the play has nothing to do with Seneca, but is taken directly, with change of names and localities, from the first *novella* of the fourth day of the *Decameron*—the story of the cruelty used by Tancredi towards Ghismonda and her lover Guiscardo. The Prince of Salerno becomes King Demetrius of Thebes, who slays Filostrato, the lover of his daughter Pamfila, and sends her the slain man's heart, upon which she dies. The author introduces Tindaro, a species of pander, upon whose lips he puts a tirade against the vices of Courts. The play has no poetical merit, but is of some importance as being one of the very earliest Italian tragedies. It is divided into five acts, with choral interludes. The dialogue is in *terza rima* ; the interludes—especially that between the Chorus and Love after the first Act—are written in lyrical measures and with some fire.

Cammelli's chief poetical work, however, is an extraordinary collection of caudated or tailed sonnets, for the most part of a satirical nature. *Di tutto quel che vedi fai sonetti*, he represents a friend as saying to him : " Of all you see you make sonnets. Are you not yet sick of it ? If you even saw a hen on the road, or two little cocks fighting each other ! " ² In these vivid little poems, he paints his own life

¹ *Tragedia de Antonio da Pistoia, a lo illu. et excellen. Duca Hercule de Ferrara*, Venice, 1508. Cf. also F. Bugiani, *Filostrato e Pamfila, Tragedia di Antonio Cammelli. Appunti critici*. Pistoia, 1896.

² Sonnet 35. I refer throughout to Renier's admirable edition, *I Sonetti del Pistoia giusta l'apografo Trivulziano*.

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and the conditions of the times, jests at his poverty and humiliation, satirises the Duke's officers and ministers. Nor does he rest there. The whole society of Italy, high and low, during the last decade of the Quattrocento and the beginning of the following century, passes before our eyes ; we see the simoniacal election of Alexander VI ; follow the rise and fall of Lodovico il Moro ; and mark the devout, pacific bearing of Ercole, the difficulties and dangers of the minor potentates and powers. "With them," writes Professor Renier, "we can follow all the political vicissitudes of the last years of the fifteenth century, seen with the eyes of a courtier poet, enthusiastic for the Moro as long as he was potent, but not refraining from assailing him (as usually happens) after his ruinous fall."¹ Or, if we prefer, we can watch the ladies of the epoch at their toilet, and study the rival claims to supremacy in beauty of the women of all the chief cities of Italy.²

Nowhere, in the poetry of those days, do we find a nobler note than that struck by Il Pistoia in his sonnet on the shameful victory of Fornovo :—

Passò il Re franco, Italia, a tuo dispetto,
Cosa che non fe mai 'l popul romano,
Col legno in resta e con la spada in mano,
Con nemici a le spalle e innanti al petto.
Cesare e Scipion, di cui ho letto,
I nemici domôr di mano in mano ;

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. xxxi.

² The Florentines (says the poet) appear beautiful, but in reality are terribly painted and made up ; the women of Siena are perfectly heavenly, and the Sienese men are utterly unworthy of them ; there are still some beautiful ladies among the Ferrarese, but not like what they were before the Venetian invasion, "when we saw the Slavonians bridge the Po" ; the Milanese are too fat and overdressed, and behave at table like Germans. Sonnets 16, 17, 18, 19.

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E costui, come un can che va lontano
 Mordendo questo e quel, passò via netto.
 Matre vituperata da' 'taliani,
 Se Cesare acquistò, più non si dica,
 Insubri, Galli, Cimbri, Indi e Germani.
 Concubina di Mida al ciel nemica,
 Ch' hai dato a Vener Marte nelle mani,
 Discordia con un vel gli occhi te intrica,
 Chè con poca fatica,
 In sul transirti il Gallo le confine
 Tutti i tuoi figli diventôr galline.
 Sia come vole il fine,
 Se ben del mondo acquistasti l' imperio,
 Mai non si estinguerà il tuo vituperio.¹

No less eloquent is the poet in lashing the infamies of
 Pope Alexander and his policy:—

Ruina de' Cristian, tu, falso prete,
 Per simonia comprasti il divin culto,
 Da cui è fatto il templo santo stulto
 Con omicidi, stupri e con monete.
 Al primo successor bastò la rete
 Sol per pescar a Dio fidel tumulto ;
 E tu, d' ogn' or con qualche novo insulto
 Tien' de la fede le chiavi secrete.
 Così mal vanno le cose divine
 In man d'un simoniaco, il qual fa il gregge

¹ "The French King has passed, Italy, in thy despite (a thing that the Roman people never suffered), with lance in rest and sword in hand, with foes at his back and foes in front.

"Caesar and Scipio, of whom I have read, subdued their enemies hand to hand ; and he, like a dog who goes off biting this one and that, has passed clear away.

"Mother disgraced by the Italians, let no more be said of Caesar's conquest of Insubrians, Gauls, Cimbri, Indians and Germans ;

"Concubine of Midas, foe to Heaven, who hast given Mars into the hands of Venus, discord confuses thy eyes with a veil ;

"For, with little labour, as soon as the Cock crossed thy borders, all thy children became hens ! Be the end what it will, although thou didst acquire the empire of the world, never shall thy disgrace be wiped out." (Sonnet 324.)

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D' ogn' or guidare a le sue concubine.
Tutto quel che tu fai iustizia elegge ;
Il ciel pien d' ira ha in sen le tue ruine
Perchè il ciel sempre un mal vivo non regge.
 Crudele a la tua legge !
Nova pena per te la terra ordisce
Se il gallo a l' angue mai per te se unisce.
 Scacciaranno le bisce
Il famelico verme iniquo e tristo,
Che divora la Croce e Jesu Cristo.¹

While the throng listened to the words of Fra Girolamo,
Il Pistoia had scoffed. Thus, just after Fornovo :—

Ogni predicator si fa indovino :
Hanne Firenze un sì speculativo,
Che molti Fiorentin non bevon vino.²

And again, when Maximilian—"il novo Costantino"—is at
Pisa, he is more emphatically contemptuous :—

Al suon d' una campana
Il popol fiorentin va tutto in macchia,
Credulo al garrular d' una cornacchia.

¹ "Ruin of Christians, thou, false priest, with simony hast bought
the divine cult ; by thee has the holy temple become perverted with
murder, rapine and money.

"For the first successor sufficed the net only, to fish for a faithful
throng to God ; and thou every hour with some new outrage
holdest the secret keys of the Faith.

"Thus ill go things divine in the hand of a simoniac, who con-
tinually lets his concubines guide the flock.

"Justice chooses all that thou dost ; Heaven full of wrath hath
thy ruin in store, because it will not suffer an evil liver for ever.

"Cruel to thy law ! The earth is preparing a new penalty for
thee, if the Cock ever through thee unites with the Snake. The
Vipers will hunt out the ravening worm, wicked and fell, that is
devouring the Cross and Jesus Christ." (Sonnet 369. In all these
sonnets, there is the obvious play upon *gallo*, "cock" or "Gaul."
The Snake and Vipers are the Sforza.)

² "Every preacher becomes a diviner. Florence has one of them
so speculative, that many Florentines drink no wine." (Sonnet 326.)

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O Dio che nova macchia,
Chè per semplicità son quasi al fondo,
E vendevon l'astuzia a tutto il mondo !¹

But, after the Friar's fall and martyrdom, he speaks of him with reverence :—

Pover Marzocco, come ti sta il core ?
* * * * *
Il frate che a Cristo era tuo sensale
Ucciso hai per paura d'un pastore.²

Most successful of all Cammelli's sonnets are, perhaps, those in the form of dialogue. In one, a sharp passage of dispute between the Cardinal, his doorkeeper and the poet, the latter tries to force his way in, to present his most reverend and illustrious Lordship with "a sack of sonnets," and naturally does not find himself well received.³ Even finer is the scene between the murdered Zampante, St. Peter and the demon Farfarello, come out of Dante's *Inferno* to claim his prey at the gates of Paradise :—

Toc !—Chi batte ?—Amici, aprimi un poco.
—Come ti chiami ?—Da Lucca Gregorio.
—Ah ah ! io el so, il tuo nome è notorio ;
Su su a la forca, a la manara, al foco.
Per te non fu fondato questo loco :
Più giù te aspetta un altro concistorio.
—Lasciami venir qui col tuo aiutorio.
—No no, altro ti vuol cociere il coco.
—Bu bu—Chi abbaia ?—Pier, fammi ragione.
—Chi sei tu che mi chiami ?—Farfarello.

¹ " At the sound of a bell the people of Florence all gather together, credulous in the chattering of a crow. O God, what new shame ! By their simplicity are they almost in the depths, and they used to sell cunning to all the world." (Sonnet 340.)

² " Poor Marzocco, how is thy heart ? The Friar, that was thy broker with Christ, hast thou slain for fear of a shepherd." (Sonnet 364.)

³ Sonnet 144.

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—Che cosa vuoi da me ?—Questo latrone,
 Che al ciel per crudeltà si fe rubello ;
 Io ti dico da parte di Plutone
 Che gli è per carta suo : ecco il libello.

—Io non voglio esser quello
 Che a nissun patto l' altrui preda toglia ;
 Piglialo, menal via, fa la tua voglia.

—Cávati fôr la spoglia,
 Cammina, traditor, che ogni martire
 Sarà poca vivanda al tuo fallire.¹

Every phase in the complicated struggles and intrigues from the battle of Fornovo to the downfall of the Moro finds echo in Cammelli's later sonnets. In one of the latest, *Italia, il Turco vien*, he exhorts the princes and potentates of Italy to lay aside their private quarrels and hatreds, to unite against the common foe :—

A te serà vergogna,
 Re franco, a mover contra Italia piede,
 Chè a te s' aspetta mantener la fede.

¹ “*Toc!* P. Who knocks ? Z. Friends, just open to me. P. What is thy name ? Z. Gregorio of Lucca. P. Ah, ah ! I know it, thy name is notorious ; hence to the gallows, to the axe, to the fire. This place was not made for thee ; another consistory awaits thee lower down. Z. Let me come hither with thy aid. P. No, no, elsewhere the cook will make it hot for thee.

“*Bow, wow!* P. Who is barking ? F. Peter, do me justice. P. Who art thou that callest me ? F. Farfarello. P. What wantest thou from me ? F. This great robber, who by his cruelty hath rebelled against Heaven. I tell thee, in the name of Pluto, that he is his by script ; here is the book.

“P. I would not be the man to take away another's prey on any account. Seize him, take him away, do thy will ! F. Come out of that and march, traitor ; for every torment will be little recompense for thy wickedness.” (Sonnet 84.)

Sonnets 83, 85, 86 are upon the same subject. An anonymous sonnet and ballata on the death of Zampante are in the *Diario Ferrarese*, col. 332. Cf. above, p. 326.

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E se non si provvede,
Un dì farà questa bestia silvestra
E d' Italia e di Francia una minestra.¹

And in the French conquest of Milan, and capture of the Sforza, he discerns the general overthrow of the independence of Italy :—

Tu sei prigion e presa è Italia teco,
Tu sei caduto e l' Italia è caduta,
E chi questo non vede è in tutto cieco.²

In the last sonnet of all, he bewails the hapless plight of Italy, "dismembered even to the bones, with head bowed down and body genuflected," but anticipates a new epoch in her history which he himself will not live to see :—

Ma perchè sempre una stagion non dura,
Ne aspetteremo un' altra, trista o bona,
Nella qual trovarèn miglior ventura.
E forse, per sciagura,
Prima che giunga o giunta sbuchi fore,
Il nostro lume serà senza umore.³

Although but sparingly favoured by the ducal Court, Cammelli had a fervent admirer in the Marchesana Isabella. On June 13, 1502, a few months after the poor poet's death, she wrote to Niccolò da Correggio: "When the Pistoia

¹ "Shame will it be to thee, French King, to move foot against Italy, for we look to thee to maintain the Faith. And if steps be not taken, one day this savage beast will make one soup of Italy and of France." (Sonnet 373.)

² "Thou art a prisoner, and Italy is taken with thee; thou art fallen and Italy is fallen; and whoso sees not this is totally blind." (Sonnet 386.)

³ "But since one season does not last for ever, we shall await another, bad or good, in which we shall find better fortune. And perchance, for our ill luck, before it comes or, if come, breaks forth, our light will be without any oil." (Sonnet 388. *Io ti mando un capitol fatto adesso de Italia.*)

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lived, he offered and promised many times to put together in one work all the things composed by him, and to entitle them to us ; but, since time has failed him, he has not been able to accomplish this. We understand that your Lordship has been at pains to collect them and make a codex of them, which pleases us much, and we praise you for this most pious deed. But we remind you that you must not deprive us of that right which we have in them by the disposition and bequest of the poet.” Needless to say, the Count promptly reassured his illustrious correspondent : “ I reply to your Ladyship,” he wrote, “ that not only do I desire that you should have these things of the Pistoia, but from as many excellent poets as the world possesses.” ¹

This correspondence connects two of the most conspicuous Court poets of Ercole’s circle together, and with Isabella. We have already frequently met with the Duke’s nephew, Niccolò da Correggio, who was born, as we saw, in 1450. Courtier and soldier, he played a leading part in almost every Ferrarese festivity, and, as a condottiere of the Dukes of Milan, fought in every warlike enterprise undertaken by the House of Sforza in Italy. He had married Cassandra, one of the daughters of the great Bartolommeo Colleoni, a lady of great wit and beauty, who sumptuously entertained the French ambassador on his way from Piacenza to Ferrara to assist at the wedding of Lucrezia Borgia.²

¹ Isabella’s letter and Niccolò’s answer, in Renier, *op. cit.*, pp. viii, ix. Similarly, we find Jacopo Tebaldi writing to Isabella about his cousin’s poems : “ In his book I have found a sonnet which shows me that his intention has always been to dedicate this work to thy lofty name. I would not that my theft should deprive thee of any of thy rights ; but have entitled the little book to thee.” Dedicatory letter prefixed to Tebaldeo’s sonnets.

² Cagnolo in *Lucrezia Borgia in Ferrara*, pp. 34, 35.

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Although Ariosto was to record his name as the chief singer of the praises of Beatrice d' Este, Niccolò's admiration was even more pronounced for her sister Isabella: "Each one who opens his mouth to utter praise or treat in any respect of my most illustrious Isabella, the most lofty Mantuan Marchioness," he writes to El Prete, "can say in those words of the Holy Scripture: *Ah, ah, ah, I cannot speak.*"¹ "He was certainly not a great poet, nor a true poet," write his modern biographers; "in that end of the century, his ingenious and clever inventions, the facility with which he composed verses and his high social position, certainly were of much more avail in procuring him fame than the intrinsic value of those poor rhymes."² As we have already seen, he wrote for the ducal theatre in Ferrara his *Favola di Cefalo e di Aurora*, a play in five acts, derived from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, on the story of Cephalus and Procris—the very same that a contemporary, Piero di Cosimo, was to tell in line and colour at Florence in the splendid picture now in the National Gallery of London. The dialogue is in octaves, the choral interludes in various lyrical measures. Represented in 1487, it must rank as the first original Italian drama after the *Orfeo* of Poliziano, but is far inferior in every respect to its predecessor. A few years later, in 1491, Niccolò wrote for Isabella a poem on Psyche in *ottava rima*, partly derived from Apuleius, partly—when dealing with the singer's own love-affairs—his own composition.³

¹ Letter of August 10, 1500. Luzio and Renier, *Niccolò da Correggio*, ii. p. 69.

² Luzio and Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

³ The two works, *Innamoramento di Cupido e di Psyche* and the *Favola di Cefalo*, are published together in the Venetian edition of 1507. A selection of Niccolò's lyrics is given by Renier and Luzio, *op. cit.*, iv.

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There is, if I mistake not, a touch of genuine inspiration in one of his earlier lyrics, the sonnet written from his Venetian prison, after the disastrous battle of Argenta in 1482, urging Ferrara to submit to the inevitable :—

Vedova, sola, ottenebrata e scura,
 Ti veggio, alma Ferrara, in tanti affanni,
 Che s' io contemplo a li passati danni,
 Del tuo sterminio in tutto ho gran paura.
 Veggio il campo nemico alle tue mura,
 Che visser già pacifiche tant' anni.
 Temo or le forze, ora i civili inganni,
 Se il Ciel non ha di té per pietà cura.
 Io t'amo. Tu sai ben, ch' io n' ho cagione.
 Deh ! perchè non deponi omai l' orgoglio ?
 Chè sai : sol l' umiltà vince il Leone.
 Più che di mia prigion di te mi doglio ;
 Che poi che vedi in l' arme la ragione,
 Vogli schivare il porto e dar nel scoglio.¹

In a very limited sense, the mantle of Boiardo may be said to have fallen upon a minor poet of a different stamp: Francesco Bello, called because of his blindness *Il Cieco*, or Francesco Orbo da Ferrara. Recent researches have shown that he was not one of those two blind poets who, in 1477,

¹ “Widowed and alone, overwhelmed with darkness, do I see thee, kind Ferrara, in so great torments that, if I contemplate thy past losses, I have great fear of thy total destruction.

“I see the hostile army at thy walls, which have lived in peace so many years. Violence and civic treachery I fear alike, unless Heaven for pity takes care for thee.

“I love thee. Thou knowest well that I have cause. Ah ! why dost not henceforth lay aside thy pride ? for thou knowest humility alone conquers the Lion.

“More than for my own imprisonment I grieve for thee, who, since thou appealest to the arbitrament of arms, wilt shun the harbour and break upon the rock ” (In Sanudo, *Vite dei Duchi di Venezia*, col. 1226. I have taken a slight liberty in reading *che vedi* for *ch' i' vidi* in the penultimate line).

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sang at the supper-party given to Lodovico Sforza and his brothers in the Palazzo Schifanoia.¹ His chief poem, the *Mambriano*, was composed between 1490 and 1496, chiefly at Bozzolo, where Gian Francesco Gonzaga, an uncle of the Marchese Gian Francesco of Mantua, kept a petty Court. "I send Francesco Orbo to your Ladyship," wrote the former from Bozzolo to Isabella, on November 26, 1492, "in order that you, too, may be able to take some pleasure in his singing, which gets better every day; and I pray you, when you shall think fit, to be good enough to send him back, because here I have little other pleasure than to listen to him."² After his patron's death, Francesco probably settled in Mantua, where he ended his poem in 1496, and died a few years later.

The *Mambriano* is a poetic romance in the metre, and to some extent after the manner, of the *Orlando Innamorato*, though conspicuously inferior to it in merit and interest. We have the same mingling of Arthurian and Carolingian elements, of exaggerated knightly prowess and strange enchantments, and, though *Il Cieco* is frequently more serious than Boiardo, the same impossible feats and japing references to the authority of Turpin. *Novelle* are introduced too, at intervals, and these are, perhaps, the most successful parts of the poem.³ The first six-and-twenty cantos alone

¹ G. Rua, *Postille su tre Poeti Ciechi*, in the *Giornale Storico della Letteratura Italiana*, xi. p. 296. The two blind poets were Giovanni and Francesco da Firenze.

² G. Rua, *op. cit.*, p. 294.

³ For *Il Cieco*, see especially G. Rua, *Le Novelle del Mambriano*. A full analysis of the poem will be found in Panizzi's *Essay on the Romantic Narrative Poetry of the Italians*. *Il Cieco* appears also to have translated Statius. He apparently dedicated the *Mambriano* to a prelate of the House of Gonzaga, perhaps the Cardinal Sigismondo; but, in the edition printed at Ferrara in 1509, it is stated

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are, strictly speaking, concerned with the ostensible subject of the work. They tell us of the war waged upon Charlemagne and the Christians of France by Mambriano, King of Bithynia, who has vowed to destroy Montalbano to avenge his kinsman Mambrino, whom he supposes to have been treacherously slain by Rinaldo. Alternating with this are adventures of the paladins Orlando and Astolfo in Spain and Africa—Astolfo being again a comic character and fairly successful. The enchantress Carandina exercises her arts on both Mambriano and Rinaldo, holding the latter in amorous bondage while the invader routs Charlemagne and besieges Bradamante in Montalbano. Released by Malagigi's sorceries, Rinaldo defeats Mambriano, pursues him into Asia and conquers him, partly by force, partly by magnanimity. Mambriano marries Carandina, and the other enchantress, Fulvia, is similarly converted from the errors of her ways. It is probable that the poem originally ended with the submission of Mambriano and his alliance with the victorious Rinaldo. But, possibly after his removal from Bozzolo to Mantua and at the instance of his new patrons, the poet sings on again in nineteen cantos practically unconnected with what has gone before. He gives his hearers the exploits of Rinaldo's son Ivonetto, Orlando's pilgrimage to Compostela, fresh sorceries of Malagigi for the benefit of his cousin, and other episodes which have nothing to do with the rest of the story. And now, as in Boiardo's poem, political echoes begin to be heard—as we should expect with a Court poet of the victor of Fornovo. The blind poet is at first enthusiastic for the coming of King Charles, and proposes to celebrate his glories in song:—

that he had intended to recast the beginning of the poem and dedicate it to Ippolito d' Este.

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Perseo, rimonta sopra il tuo Pegaso
 E vedi di formare un maggior fonte,
 Che 'l non ci basta l' antico Parnaso
 Nè le nove sorelle insieme agionte.
 Bisogno c' è d'un più profondo vaso,
 E d' altre muse più ingegnose e pronte,
 A voler celebrar con vera historia
 Del novo Carlo la excelsa memoria.

Costui in picciol tempo ha oprato tanto
 Che, se 'l fin corrisponde al gran principio,
 Nui lo vedremo tor la gloria e il vanto
 A Cesare e Pompeo, a Fabio e Scipio,
 E rinfrancare il bel Sepolcro Santo
 Ad onta di colui che 'l tien mancipio
 Già son molti anni, e fuor del proprio chiostro,
 Profanamente in vituperio nostro.¹

But in the next canto he turns round, in sympathy naturally with the newly formed Italian League, and bewails *la gallica nebbia*, this Gallic battle-cloud that has swept down the Alps and tinged the waters of the Italian rivers with blood ; and, a little later, the sound of war has so drawn away his thoughts from Helicon, that he is almost disposed to lay down the lyre, seeing " the ruin of this our ill-defended Italy." ² At last, in the rumours of a renewed French

¹ " Perseus, mount again upon thy Pegasus and see thou formest a larger fountain, for the ancient Parnasus does not suffice us, nor the nine sisters united together ; we need a deeper vessel, and other Muses more talented and ready, to strive to celebrate with true history the lofty memory of the new Charles.

" He in brief while has accomplished so much that, if the end corresponds to the great beginning, we shall see him take the glory and the vaunt from Caesar and Pompey, Fabius and Scipio, and liberate the beauteous Holy Sepulchre, in despite of him who for many years has held it enslaved and out of its proper cloister, profanely to our disgrace " (xxx. 1, 2).

² xxxii. 1 ; xxxvi. 1, 2.

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invasion in 1496, he breaks off at the end of Canto xlv—practically at the same point that he had reached nineteen cantos before—with the triumphal return of his paladins to Paris :—

Nel qual tripudio con giubilo e festa
Voglio lassarli e terminar l' historia,
Chè 'l furor de la gallica tempesta
Mi tra gli antichi fuor de la memoria,
E non mi lassa far più manifesta
Secondo il consueto la lor gloria;
Anzi per forza mi constringe e move
A transmutar le cose vecchie in nove.

Basta ch' io v' ho condutti i paladini
A la lor patria vittoriosi e sani,
E soggiugati tutti i Saracini
Che volean molestar nostri Cristiani,
E narrato oltra i gesti peregrini
De Renaldo e de gli altri capitani,
In che modo il superbo Mambriano
Fu fatto tributario a Carlo Mano.

E perchè da costui ho incominciato,
Se 'l non dispiace a vostra signoria,
Io vo che *Mambrian* sia intitolato
Il libro ove è fondata l' opra mia;
Chè simel titol da Turpin gli è dato,
Scrittor famoso il qual non scriveria
Per tutto l'or del mondo una menzogna,
E chi il contrario tien vaneggia e sogna.¹

¹ " In this triumph with jubilee and rejoicing am I fain to leave them and end the story, for the fury of the Gallic tempest draws the ancients out of my memory, and lets me not manifest any more their glory according to my wont; nay, by force it compels and moves me to transform old things into new.

" It is enough that I have brought you the paladins victorious and sound to their native land, and subdued all the Saracens who wished to molest our Christians, and further narrated the wondrous

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In the poetry, as in the painting, of Duke Ercole's reign, the artist was already born who should eclipse the fame of all the rest: *È nato chi l' uno e l' altro cacerà di nido*, to adopt the mighty Dantesque phrase. Lodovico Ariosto, the son of Count Niccolò and nephew of Francesco di Rinaldo Ariosti, both of whom we have met under unfavourable circumstances in the course of these pages, was born at Reggio in September, 1474, while his father was holding the office of captain of the citadel in that town. In 1486 Count Niccolò with his family removed to the capital, and the young Lodovico, then between eleven and twelve years old, had his first sight of the magnificent city of Ferrara (then awakening to a new and more splendid life after the horrors of the Venetian invasion), which was ever afterwards to be associated with his name. His father was bent upon making the boy study law at the Studio, but all Lodovico's tastes were for literature and the drama. In August, 1493, he had been one of the twenty young men whom Ercole took with him to Pavia, to play in the Plautine comedies before the Duchess Beatrice and Lodovico Sforza.¹ The first poem of his that has been preserved to us was written on the occasion of the death of the Duchess Leonora in the following October; it is an elegy in the vernacular, in *terza rima*, in parts imitated from the description of the passing away of Laura in Petrarca's *Trionfo della Morte*.

deeds of Rinaldo and the other captains, in what wise the proud Mambriano was made tributary to Charlemagne.

"And because I have begun with him, if it does not displease your Lordship, I would have the book upon which my work is founded entitled *Mambriano*; for a like title is given it by Turpin, a famous writer who would not write a lie for all the gold of the world, and who holdeth the contrary raves and dreams" (xlv, at the end).

¹ See above, chapter vii.

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After this, probably gratified at his success, his father left Lodovico free to follow his own bent. Under the guidance of the humanist Gregorio da Spoleto, he plunged into the Latin poets, and began himself to compose poems in their language. He grew intimate with his fellow-pupil under Gregorio, the afterwards famous Alberto Pio of Carpi,¹ and with Ercole Strozzi ; a little later, he got to know Pietro Bembo, probably through one or other of the Strozzi.

This first period of Ariosto's life was, in Carducci's much quoted phrase, *tutta latina*. All the poems that he wrote were in the language and measures of the ancients, Catullus, Horace and Tibullus being his usual models ; they are partly addressed to the three friends above mentioned and to the beloved kinsman, Pandolfo di Malatesta Ariosti, who shared his tastes and studies, partly to women. One of his first poems that we can date with certainty is an ode in alcaic stanzas, *Ad Philiroem*, written in the summer of 1496, when Charles VIII was at Lyons and a new French invasion was hourly expected. In amorous dalliance with sweet Phyllis among the flowers, watching the reapers at their work, young Lodovico can jest at the rumours of Gallic fleets and armies, and the threatened downfall of his country, *turribus ausoniis ruinam* : "Me nulla tangat cura !" Thus the printed version of the ode ; but in the original sketch there were four other stanzas interposed, which the poet chose to omit and which give another aspect to his indifference. They struck at the mercenary soldiers who shed their blood for gold, at the cupidity and ingratitude of the Italian despots, who robbed the children of those whose service had made

¹ In consequence of the perpetual quarrels in the Pio family, Ercole practically annexed Carpi to the Duchy of Ferrara in 1500, leaving Alberto only a nominal and partial possession.

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them great.¹ In a different tone, but not dissimilar in spirit, are the lines in a poem addressed to Ercole Strozzi, after the French conquest of Milan :—

Quid nostra an Gallo regi an servire Latino,
Si sit idem hinc atque hinc non leve servitium ?
Barbaricone esse est peius sub nomine, quam sub
Moribus ? At ducibus, Dii, date digna malis.²

Somewhat remarkable, to say the least of it, is the Epithalamium which Ariosto composed for the marriage of Don Alfonso with Lucrezia Borgia, in Latin hexameters ;³ the Herculean and Romulean youths contend in alternate song, the one band rejoicing in the new glory that has shone upon Ferrara, the other bewailing the heavy loss that Rome has suffered—but both agreeing in hailing this much married lady as *pulcherrima Virgo* !

But now Ariosto, after the death of his father, had the whole care of his family upon his shoulders, and was obliged to appeal for aid to the Duke, who, in 1502, made him captain of the Rocca of Canossa in his own Reggian district, where he loved and sang in Latin verse, and, perhaps, began the great work in which he was to complete what Boiardo had left unfinished. In the following year, he entered the service of the Cardinal Ippolito, in which condition the death of Ercole and accession of Alfonso found him.

¹ *Carm.* i. 8 ; Carducci, *Delle Poesie Latine di Lodovico Ariosto*, pp. 88–90.

² “ What matters it to us whether we serve a French or an Italian King, if there be the same hard slavery in either case ? Is it worse to be under a barbarian name than under barbarian morals ? But, Gods, give their deserts to these evil rulers ! ” (*Carm.* i. 6.)

³ *Carm.* i. 4.

Chapter XIV

THE END OF THE HERCULEAN AGE

N^O sooner had the news of the old Duke's death spread through the city than Tito Strozzi, Judge of the Twelve Sages and, therefore, nominally the representative of the people of Ferrara, solemnly came to the Castello and consigned the sceptre and sword to Alfonso, recognizing him as sovereign. Dressed in white and wearing the ducal cap, Alfonso rode in state through the city, between the Cardinal Ippolito and the Visdomino of Venice, preceded by the Cavaliere Giulio Tassoni bearing the ducal sword, followed by Don Ferrando and the other members of the reigning House, the nobles and magistrates on horseback, with mounted crossbowmen and men-at-arms, to the sound of martial music. As they rode through the vast crowd in the piazza, Alfonso turned to the Visdomino: "What think you of this people?" "A goodly folk, my lord," answered the Venetian. "I should not care to live," said the Duke, "if this people and I did not bestir ourselves in the service of the most illustrious Signoria." Before the high altar of the Duomo, Alfonso took the solemn oath of governing well and performing justice to his people, into the hands of the Cardinal. A heavy storm of snow and wind had raged, as the Duke and his train passed through the streets to the Duomo; "Verily," writes Pistofilo, "it was

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an omen and a sign of the furious travails that he would have to sustain in his future reign.”¹

But, at first, there seemed no cloud in the direction from which these “furious travails” were eventually to come. “To-day right early,” wrote Pope Julius to the new Duke of Ferrara, “there came to us our beloved son Beltrando Costabili, our notary, the counsellor and orator of thy Nobility, and, manifesting immense sorrow in his garb and countenance, he showed us the letter in which thou dost write that thy father Hercules of glorious memory, as it hath pleased God, hath departed from this life, and that thou hast been declared Duke by the unanimous consent of the nobles and people. These things have variously affected our soul. For, according to the flesh, we cannot but greatly grieve that the Holy Roman Church and we have been deprived of such a son; for he was endowed with singular prudence and probity, and followed this Holy Apostolic See with sincere piety. His preservation was to be desired, not only by thee and his other sons and his peoples, but by all the right-minded; but, being born mortal, it was necessary that he should some time die; he lived long enough for¹ glory, but, perchance, not long enough for you. It must, nevertheless, afford thee great consolation that his death befitted a life spent in Catholic piety; so that we may hope that abundant grace is laid up for him with the just Judge, our Saviour. But we rejoice that thou, beloved son, hast received the government of the duchy with such great consent, hoping that, following the example of so great a parent, thou wilt show thyself such to us and to the said Apostolic See and to the peoples committed to thee,

¹ Sanudo, *Diarii*, vi. col. 126; Pistofilo, *Vita di Alfonso I d' Este*, p. 493.

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as not merely to fulfil, but to surpass by far the opinion that we have conceived of thee. We, indeed, receiving and embracing thee as our most special son (as thou art), shall do with paternal affection whatever we shall learn may tend to supporting the honour of thy Nobility and the peace of thy peoples ; and all the more diligently as the newness of thy sovereignty seems the more to demand it ; so that, as far as pertains to us and this Holy Apostolic See, thou shalt not feel that thou hast lost thy father Hercules.”¹

Alfonso had inherited but little of his father's popularity, and had none of his wife's culture. Brusque in manners, negligent in attire and somewhat forbidding in appearance, he left Lucrezia to her own circle of poets and humanists, while he devoted himself to his favourite mechanical pursuits, casting guns, working in metal, manufacturing majolica vessels and the like in his own private *bottega*. Rough artisans and men of low birth surrounded him, jesting freely with him, frequently admitted to his table, and even sharing in his coarser pleasures. It is clear that he disliked Lucrezia's friends. Bembo had grown more cautious and distant in his homage to the Duchess, since her husband's return, and let himself less frequently be seen in Ferrara. In this year, 1505, he published his *Asolani* at Venice, with a dedicatory letter to Lucrezia, in which he mentions “my friends, much loved by me and honoured by the world, your intimates and familiars, Messer Ercole Strozza and Messer Antonio Tebaldeo.”² The Duke gave these two poets a severe fright at the beginning of his reign. We do not know exactly what he did or said ; but, on February 3,

¹ Brief of January 29, 1505. *Archivio Vaticano*, xxxix. 22, ff. 252v, 253.

² Letter of August, 1505, in vol. viii. of the *Opere*.

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Benedetto Capiluppo wrote to the Marchesana Isabella that Ercole Strozzi was in great danger, because he had all the people against him and was out of favour with the Duke, hinting that there was something more that he would tell her by word of mouth ; while, on April 9, Tebaldeo wrote to the Marquis, begging for some ecclesiastical benefice, because " this Duke hates me, though I know not why, and it is not safe for me to stay in this town." ¹ For the present, however, the warning was sufficient, and the two remained in Ferrara in Lucrezia's service.

Firmly seated upon the throne, Alfonso proceeded to secure the friendship of Venice. At the beginning of March, dressed in black, accompanied by his brothers Ferrando and Giulio, with a following of some six hundred men, he paid a state visit to the Doge, and was received with the utmost cordiality. But these were dark days for all Ferrara. Throughout this first year of Alfonso's reign, there was great famine and scarcity of corn ; men and women died of hunger in the streets. And, in the summer, the pestilence followed ; several thousand persons perished, and thousands more left the city. Battista Guarini died in July, and Tito Vespasiano Strozzi in August.² Lucrezia fled to Reggio, where, in the citadel, she gave birth to a son who did not long survive. The Duke with his Court took up

¹ Luzio and Renier, *La Coltura e le Relazioni Letterarie d' Isabella d' Este*, ii. 2, pp. 207, 239. In the following year, 1506, Lucrezia sent them both to Mantua, in February and December respectively, with autograph letters, urgently commending them to Isabella's protection (*ibid.*, pp. 208, 239) ; but the trouble in each case passed over, and they were able to return to Ferrara.

² Tito's son Ercole, who had been associated with him in the office of Judge of the Twelve Sages, now held it alone, until the following April, when Antonio di Rinaldo Costabili took his place.



Alonso

Alfonso D'Este
Third Duke of Ferrara.
After Titian by Diego Velazquez.

THE END OF THE HERCULEAN AGE

his quarters in Belriguardo. A copious harvest caused a general amelioration in the following year ; but, in the meanwhile, an appalling tragedy had taken place which threw a dark cloud over the House of Este.

We have already seen that, before the old Duke's death, there had been some hints of a party in Ferrara prepared to put forward Don Ferrando as a pretender to the succession, and that it was rumoured that, if Alfonso had not returned from his travels in time, Ferrando would have been acclaimed Duke. There were many in the duchy that disliked Alfonso's personality and his apparent neglect of State business for his mechanical pursuits. Educated in the pompous Court of Naples, experienced in the service of France and Venice, Ferrando was intensely ambitious, and he now saw, in the discontent which was prevalent in these opening months of his brother's reign, his own way to the throne.

The origin of the affair is still shrouded in mystery. But it appears that in this same September, 1505, while Lucrezia was at Reggio, the conspirators met at Carpi—that perpetual nest of conspiracies against the House of Este—without any definite result. Besides Don Ferrando himself, the leading spirits were Count Albertino Boschetti, a man between sixty and seventy years old, and his son-in-law, Gerardo de' Roberti of Reggio, who was one of the captains of the Duke's crossbowmen. The lesser limbs of the plot were Franceschino Boccaccio of Rubiera, a creature of Ferrando's, and a priest of Gascony, called Gianni, whom Alfonso had picked up as a beggar boy during his travels, attracted by his sweet voice in singing, and admitted to his intimate circle, and who was one of the agents of his vices. Before they decided on taking definite action, the sting of revenge

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was added to the cravings of ambition, and the two other Estensian brothers were dragged upon the stage, to play their parts in the impending tragedy.

Donna Angela Borgia had naturally not been content with playing the part of the Dame of Malehaut to Bembo's would-be Lancelot and Lucrezia's guiltless Guenevere, but had been indulging in a little love-making on her own account. Her extraordinary beauty, her golden Borgian hair which rivalled that of her cousin, wrought havoc in the hearts of the Estensian princes, especially those of the ecclesiastical profession; the Cardinal Archbishop Ippolito and the bastard Giulio were both at her feet, and she smiled upon the latter, allured by his dark eyes. "Monsignore," she said, in answer to a passionate appeal from Ippolito, "your brother's eyes are worth more than the whole of your person."

Don Giulio had temporarily fallen under the Duke's displeasure and been put under bounds at Brescello, for having liberated from the prisons at Modena a priest whom the Duke had sentenced to death there.¹ This was in September; but he shortly returned to Ferrara, suspecting no danger. On November 3, he rode out on a hunting expedition in the country round Belriguardo. The Cardinal, disguised, with a band of armed servants, lay in wait and assailed him; in spite of Giulio's strenuous resistance, he was overcome and dragged from his horse; and, while his brother stood looking on—*stando esso proprio a vedere*, according to the express testimony of Pistofilo²—they pierced both his eyes with a rapier, and left him there. The Duke was at Belriguardo when this happened; and the Cardinal

¹ Sanudo, *op. cit.*, vi. col. 225.

² *Vita di Alfonso I d' Este*, p. 494.

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himself hurried thither to inform him that their brother had been found horribly mutilated by unknown hands. In a passion of righteous indignation, Alfonso sprang from his seat—he was at table at the time—and ordered the most rigorous investigation to be made, himself hastening into Ferrara for the purpose.

The hideous crime had been only partially accomplished, and the physicians were able to save the sight of one eye. A few days after the event, on November 8, Ippolito—who had many good reasons for dreading the Pope—dispatched an epistle to Beltrando Costabili, which is a perfect model of hypocrisy. “Although we are certain,” he bade his secretary write, “that, from the letters of the Excellence of the Lord Duke, the Holiness of our Lord will have fully understood the accident that has befallen the most illustrious lord Don Giulio, our brother; nevertheless, both because of the special duty we owe his Beatitude and because these scoundrels who have offended the said Don Giulio were once in our service, we have thought fit to tell him the same again briefly, by the means of your reverend paternity. And, therefore, from us, after kissing the feet of his Holiness, you will make him understand that, while Don Giulio was at Belriguardo and riding for pleasure in the country round after midday, he was assailed by four men, formerly our familiars, who dragged him from his horse and with repeated blows strove to extinguish the light of his eyes—albeit we still hope that, by the grace of God, the affair will pass off well. The cause of such a crime and atrocious thing, so far as we have been able to understand, has been that these men (who, we said, had been of ours) had enmity with certain of the household of Don Giulio, and it seems that his Lordship favoured these latter extremely

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against them ; and those fellows, understanding that there were some differences between the said lord our brother and us (because of that priest about whom we wrote to you), believed that they would not be doing an injury to us by offending his Lordship, and so set themselves to commit so enormous an iniquity. Concerning this we have conceived the greatest sorrow that can be thought ; and we do not know that anything else could have happened to us at this time to cause us so much grief and anguish as this case, which has weighed and does weigh upon us so much that it makes us go out of our proper bounds—inasmuch as, though we are an ecclesiastic, we have left nothing undone to gratify the Lord Duke, our brother, to have these malefactors in our hands, whom as yet we have not been able to have. All this your reverend paternity will explain to his Beatitude, with your usual dexterity, and express to him the hearty sorrow that we have therefrom.”¹

As a matter of fact, Ippolito had seen his agents safe out of the territories of the duchy, and suspicion had already fallen upon himself. At the advice of the Judge of the Sages, Antonio Costabili, he left Ferrara for a while, to escape the first impulse of Alfonso's wrath ; and the Duke wrote to Venice, requesting that the malefactors should be delivered up to him, if taken. A certain Francesco Verdezino, a Venetian subject, was arrested at Cervia, accused of having been one of the assailants of Don Giulio ; and although the Cardinal intervened vigorously to prevent his extradition, the Duke bade his ambassador in Venice, Sigismondo Salimbeni, insist upon it, in season and out of season, seeing that “it is necessary for our honour that we have him, by all means, in our hands.” The Signoria, after some delay,

¹ Cappelli, *Lettere di Lodovico Ariosto*, document 4.

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complied ; the man was at first said to have confessed, but afterwards released as innocent.¹ But already the Duke's anger had evaporated, and he could do nothing without Ippolito. Before the end of December, the Cardinal was back in Ferrara, perfectly in accord with Alfonso. Niccolò da Correggio, at the Duke's instance, attempted to bring about a reconciliation between the Cardinal and Giulio ; in the presence of Alfonso, Ippolito craved pardon of Giulio, and Niccolò persuaded the two brothers to exchange the kiss of peace.² Needless to say that it was the kiss of Judas.

Thirsting for vengeance, Giulio made common cause with Don Ferrando, and it was decided that the Duke and the Cardinal should fall together. Machiavelli, in his famous chapter on conspiracies, observes that a plot against a single prince is a doubtful, perilous and imprudent thing ; but to plot against two is utterly vain and foolish. There is another difficulty that the Florentine secretary perceives in these things, and that is what he calls "the majesty and the reverence that cling to the presence of a prince"—Shakespeare's "divinity" that "doth hedge a king." "Two of his brothers," Machiavelli says, "plotted against Duke Alfonso of Ferrara, and they used as their means the priest Gianni, the Duke's singer, who many times at their request brought the Duke among them ; so that they had the opportunity of assassinating him. Nevertheless, never did one of them dare do it."³ The delay was partly due to the difficulty of killing the two together, Ferrando being bent

¹ Sanudo, *op. cit.*, vi. coll. 255, 270, 271 ; Cappelli, *op. cit.*, document 5 (ducal letter of December 2, 1505).

² Luzio and Renier, *Niccolò da Correggio*, i. p. 244. Sanudo, *op. cit.*, vi. col. 276.

³ *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio*, iii. 6.

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upon taking the Duke's life, Giulio insisting that the Cardinal should perish first. The carnival of 1506 seemed to afford the chance they needed.

Gayer than ever was the carnival of that year. The famine had abated, the plague had disappeared. With her health restored, glowing in her beauty and recovered spirits, Lucrezia presided over the festivities, with Niccolò da Correggio as her master of the revels. In an eclogue, played before the Court and partly composed by Niccolò, Mercury appeared, "proclaiming that Alcides was rejoicing in Heaven among the Gods at his son being established as Duke in his seat," and gave Alfonso a branch of olive, announcing that there would be peace, and that he need fear no more pest or famine. Let him, therefore, make merry with his glorious consort, for he was promised very shortly a new Alcides.¹ The Duchess herself, with Niccolò, attended by her buffoons, Barone and Frittella, went masked through the streets of the city. And there were other maskers, too; men secretly armed; Ferrando and his confederates, lurking through Ferrara, seeking among the crowds of disguised merrymakers to meet with the Duke and the Cardinal. Gianni, the singer, contrived that Alfonso should cross their path—but, when the fatal moment arrived, none of the conspirators dared to strike the blow.

The chance had been lost. In April, the Duke set out on a pilgrimage to Galicia, leaving the government in the hands of Lucrezia and Ippolito, under the protection of Venice. On his return, the plotting was renewed, and Ippolito's suspicions were aroused. He had Giulio watched, and frequently caught Gianni the singer, a fellow of great

¹ Letter from Bernardino de' Prosperi to Isabella d' Este, February 5, 1506. Luzio and Renier, *Niccolò da Correggio*, i. pp. 263, 264.

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physical strength, indulging in rough horse-play with the Duke,¹ which the Cardinal perceived might easily lend itself to something more serious. He warned Alfonso and had a certain Girolametto, a favourite servant of Don Giulio's, arrested.

In the meanwhile, a rumour had reached the Marquis of Mantua "of some infamous scandal, which it was our office to avert by all means in our power." Isabella, who was passionately attached to all her brothers, was wild with anxiety, and implored her husband to save Giulio from the dangers that threatened him, by inviting him to Mantua under colour of visiting their famous stables. Giulio at first seemed disposed to stand his ground; but at length, realizing the peril he was in, he fled from Ferrara and reached Mantua in safety. Here he convinced Isabella of his innocence and that he was the victim of a conspiracy. When Alfonso ordered him to return within two days, the Marquis wrote a vigorous letter on his behalf to Niccolò da Correggio, assuring him of Giulio's absolute and whole-hearted fidelity to the Duke, beseeching him to obtain from his Excellence a safe-conduct for him and an extension of the two days: "and if anything else induces us to intervene in this matter, save our universal affection for all our brothers-in-law and respect for our common honour, may God never grant us anything that we want."² This was written on July 21; but two days later, July 23, the Count Albertino and Franceschino Boccaccio, with two of Ferrando's grooms, were arrested. Under the question,

¹ See Cappelli, *op. cit.*, p. cxxvi.

² The whole letter, which throws this completely new light upon the story, is given by Luzio and Renier, *Niccolò da Correggio*, i. pp. 245, 246.

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they revealed everything. Gerardo de' Roberti had escaped to Carpi, the priest Gianni (who apparently was to have carried the plot into effect) fled to Rome.

Ferrando either could not or would not save himself; summoned to his brother's presence, he fell upon his knees and craved pardon, on the grounds that he had sinned in thought only. In a paroxysm of fury, Alfonso exclaimed that he would make him match his bastard brother, and, with his own hands, struck out one of his eyes with a rod.¹ A solemn day of thanksgiving and procession was decreed by the Commune of Ferrara, to be renewed annually. It was some while before Alfonso could get Giulio into his hands; Antonio Costabili and Niccolò da Correggio were successively sent to Mantua without result, the Marquis being entirely swayed by Isabella in the matter, until at last Alfonso personally met him at the frontier and induced him to give way.² Roberti had already been given up, and Gianni arrested in Rome. On September 10, a party of the ducal crossbowmen brought Giulio in chains to Ferrara; on September 12, Boschetti, Roberti and Boccaccio were beheaded and quartered on a scaffold in the piazza. Their heads were fixed on the tower of the Palazzo della Ragione, where they remained many years.³

For the two princes, another doom had been prepared. In the great central courtyard of the Castello a huge scaffold was reared. The Court and all the notables of Ferrara had been summoned to attend; the windows above and around were thronged with men and women, eager to behold the

¹ Frizzi, iv. p. 224; Cappelli, *op. cit.*, pp. xxix., xxx. But is it credible?

² Sanudo, *op. cit.*, vi. col. 396.

³ Pistofilo, p. 495.

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sight. What must have been Lucrezia's feelings, as she waited the coming as a felon of the man who had been her husband's proxy to bring her to her new home! The courtiers were in agitated suspense, the Duke himself sat in gloomy silence. At last the sound of the *Miserere* broke upon their ears, and, accompanied by brown-robed friars, the two half-blinded princes, helplessly dazed at the sunlight, were led up from the dungeons which are shown as those of Ugo and Parisina. Each attended by a masked headsman, ominously robed in red, they ascended the scaffold. Then Alfonso suddenly rose and signed to the executioners to stay their hands. He would spare his brothers' lives; the sentence was commuted to perpetual imprisonment.¹ Their goods were divided among the Duke's favourites; Niccolò da Correggio got Giulio's house in the Via degli Angeli, while Alfonso took into his own possession the splendid palace near San Francesco which their father had left to Ferrando.

It was evidently thought desirable to remove Donna Angela from the scenes, and, in December, Lucrezia married her to Count Alessandro Pio of Sassuolo.² We shall meet

¹ So, in effect, Fra Paolo da Lignago, ff. 174, 175; Cappelli, *op. cit.*, p. xxxi; Frizzi, iv. p. 225. But, in the case of Ferrando, all this must have been largely a matter of show. It was known in Venice, more than a month before, that his doom was perpetual imprisonment and that rooms were being prepared for him in the Castello (Sanudo vi. col. 388). Also, the Marquis of Mantua in surrendering Giulio had obtained a promise that his life should be spared. They were imprisoned high up in the Torre dei Leoni, and apparently not treated with any further rigour. The scope of the present volume fortunately allows me to reserve for another place the vile treatment of this tragedy by Lodovico Ariosto.

² "On the sixth day of December (1506), Madonna Angela Borgia went as bride to the house of the Lord Alessandro de' Pii, her bridegroom, in Ferrara, accompanied by all the Court" (Fra Paolo,

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her again—not only among those courtly dames who welcome the safe arrival of Ariosto's ship at the close of the *Orlando Furioso*. By a strange coincidence, some twenty years later, the son of this marriage, Giberto Pio, became the husband of Ippolito's natural daughter.

At the beginning of January, the last of the conspirators met his fate. The priest Gianni, who had tried to hide himself by entering the service of the Cardinal Raffaello Riario, was brought to Ferrara from Rome, and with difficulty saved from being torn to pieces by the crowd. After being horribly tortured, he was hung out in a cage from one of the towers of the Castello, and, after enduring this with much patience and apparent contrition for more than a week, he was found strangled.¹ He is the one member of the conspiracy who deserves least compassion; and who richly merited his fate.

Meanwhile, the papal thunderbolts had fallen upon the House of Bentivoglio. Inflexible in his purpose of winning back all the cities claimed by the Holy See, Julius II had occupied Perugia in August, 1506—Giampaolo Baglioni on this occasion letting slip the chance of taking the Pope and all his Court prisoners, and thus “making resound through all the world, in so great a thing, that perfidy which had already made his name infamous in things so much smaller.”² With the aid of French troops under Chaumont,

f. 175v). In 1500, before coming to Ferrara, she had been betrothed to Francesco Maria della Rovere, nephew of the then Cardinal Giuliano and heir to the Duchy of Urbino, who was then only eight years old; but the engagement had been broken off (Gregorovius, document 23).

¹ Sanudo, vi. coll. 532, 533. There is a hideous account of his treatment in Fra Paolo's Chronicle, f. 175.

² Guicciardini, vii.

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the Pope was preparing to seize upon Bologna likewise. From Cesena he issued a bull ordering Giovanni Bentivoglio, instantly to leave his city, under pain of excommunication, including all who adhered to him or had any dealings with him. In October he reached Imola, where he appointed the Marquis of Mantua lieutenant-general of the enterprise—Duke Guidobaldo of Urbino, as Gonfaloniere of the Church, being nominally the commander-in-chief of the ecclesiastical forces. “We cannot but have compassion,” wrote the Gonzaga to his wife, “for this noble and to us always friendly family of the Bentivoglio, that now finds itself so in the balance; but the confidence that the Pope has placed in us compels us to do what our honour bids.”¹

Since the death of Duke Ercole, relations had grown colder between the House of Este and Giovanni Bentivoglio. There had been much bitter feeling on both sides, over questions concerning the restrictions imposed by the government of Bologna on the new Ferrarese subjects in Cento and La Pieve taking their crops out of the Bolognese territory, and the retaliatory measures adopted by the officials of the Ferrarese custom-house in levying heavy taxes and duties upon the Bolognese. “Tell them,” wrote Alfonso to Ippolito, in the terms of the “new diplomacy” of the epoch, “that whatever happens is entirely their fault. We are in the right, and the Bolognese are in the wrong. Your most reverend Lordship can offer your own services as mediator; but let them know that, if they imagine that they are stronger than we, especially when they are in the wrong, and that they have more favour at Rome than we, they will be very greatly deceived, and that, when the time

¹ Letter of October 14, 1506. Luzio and Renier, *Mantova e Urbino*, p. 174.

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comes, they will understand it better.”¹ He, nevertheless, disliked the new situation, seeing that Bologna had always been a kind of rampart between his duchy and the States of the Church. Under compulsion, he sent a hundred men-at-arms to swell the ecclesiastical army at Imola; but had himself to be summoned three times, before he would go in person to pay his homage to the Sovereign Pontiff.

On the night of November 2, the Bentivoglio fled from Bologna, Giovanni and his wife Ginevra towards the duchy of Milan, Annibale and Ermes to Ferrara. Ippolito, who governed the State during Alfonso's absence, received them kindly; but in consequence of the excommunication, which appears to have clung to them as if it were an infectious disease, he could only shelter them for three days, during which all the churches were shut and no religious services were permitted in the city. On November 11, the Pope entered Bologna in triumph, received with every demonstration of joy by the citizens, and on his part sparing no efforts to reconcile them to the rule of the Church.

It is characteristic of the relations existing between the princes of Italy at this date that Annibale and his wife Lucrezia found a refuge in Mantua—whose Marquis had led the army that had chased them from their home, but where Isabella was kindness itself to her half-sister. But, even there, they were not suffered to rest. “The greatest cruelty has been used against us,” wrote Annibale to the Cardinal Ippolito, “so that we can stay neither in heaven nor on earth.”² The new legate of Bologna, the Cardinal Antonio Ferreri of Savona, pursued the whole family

¹ Letter of October 22, 1505. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*.

² Letter of May 1, 1507. Dallari, p. 234.

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relentlessly with interdicts and excommunications. He compelled Annibale and his little sons to leave Mantua at the beginning of April, allowing a brief delay to Lucrezia because she was with child. The poor lady wrote piteously to Alfonso and Ippolito, her half-brothers, imploring them to let her come to find a refuge with her little girls at Ferrara, her old home, as the terms of the interdict did not include women. The Duke answered that he dared not, for fear of offending the Pope, receive her, as he would have desired, but that he had written to the legate of Bologna to beg him to allow her to come to Ferrara.¹ But in the meanwhile, urged by desperation, Annibale and his brothers collected troops and entered the Bolognese territory; their enterprise failed, and Ippolito was forced to make a show of moving against them with soldiers, to prevent their taking shelter in the Duchy of Ferrara. Alfonso wrote vigorously to him from Genoa, where he was in attendance upon the King of France who was laying siege to the revolted city, bidding him take every measure that no favour should be shown to the Bentivoglio by his subjects, so that the Pope and legate may be satisfied: "If you find any one disobeying our proclamations and orders in this matter, have him punished without any respect, in such wise that we may hear his cries even here."² Nevertheless, Ippolito did as little against them as he could, succeeded in gaining both their gratitude and that of the Pope, and obtained from the latter a sort of permission for Annibale to join his wife at Mantua.³

¹ Letters of April 3 and 8, 1507. Dallari, pp. 233, 234.

² Letter of May 1, 1507. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*.

³ Dallari, p. 235. Writing from Borgo San Donnino, on May 9, Annibale and Anton Galeazzo Bentivoglio thank Ippolito for not

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Cardinal Ferreri had bidden Lucrezia leave within the month, or he would put Mantua under the interdict, and even had one of her servants tortured, "for reasons of State"; but Isabella, generous as ever, obtained a little grace for her unhappy sister, who still strove in vain for the papal permission to take refuge with her little girls in Ferrara.¹ There is a piteous letter from Lucrezia to Ippolito, in which she beseeches him to use his influence with the Governor of Bologna to get back certain goods of hers that had been seized: "not only because I have the very greatest need of them, but that it may not appear at least that I am utterly abandoned by your Lordship, and that our enemies are to enjoy my property; the which, although it be small, I need greatly, seeing that I have ten children on my shoulders and nearly forty mouths to provide for, and little provision on any side, since the lord my father-in-law is of the nature that I believe your Lordship knows; for, when he was in his own house, we could draw little from his hands and that with difficulty; your Lordship can think how he acts now." And she implores him to obtain from the Duke some help for Annibale to maintain those who are with him, not knowing to whom else to have recourse: "since my sad fate has led me perforce to beg. Your most reverend Lordship may be assured that, when I think on it, I long every hour for death, and, were it not for comfort and aid from my lady the Marchesana, who does more for me than I deserve, I should sometimes be half desperate."²

having done what he could against them. I give the text of the papal brief of approval, of May 8, 1507, in Appendix II, document 23.

¹ See Dallari, p. 236.

² Letter dated Mantua, August 18, 1507. Dallari, p. 237.

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A more sinister personage than the Bentivoglio had seemed for a moment about to return to the Romagnole stage. In December, 1506, the secretary of Cesare Borgia appeared in Ferrara, to announce to the Duchess that her brother had escaped from his Spanish prison. He probably came to see if there was any chance for his master in Romagna, and Lucrezia sent him on to the Marquis of Mantua, to whom he had a letter from Cesare announcing his escape in somewhat sanctimonious terms: "I inform your Excellence that, after so many miseries, it has pleased our Lord God to deliver me and to draw me out of prison, in the way that you will learn from Federigo, my secretary, the bearer of this letter; may it please His infinite Clemency that it be for His greater service."¹ From Mantua the secretary went on to Bologna, where the Pope had him arrested. Lucrezia wrote earnestly to the Marquis, imploring him to use his influence with the Holy Father that so great a *smaccamento*—as she more forcibly than elegantly called it—should not be given to her brother, as would be the imprisonment of his servant. "I am most certain," she wrote, "that he will not be found to have done anything wrong, as he has not come to do or to say anything that can displease or cause uneasiness to his Beatitude. His Excellence would not think or dare to do such a thing towards his Holiness, and this man, if he had any commission, would first have communicated it to me, and I should not have tolerated, nor shall I tolerate that he should be the cause even of suspicion, because I am a most devout and most faithful servant of his Beatitude, as also is the most

Giovanni Bentivoglio died at Milan in the following February. Lucrezia was finally allowed to end her days at Ferrara.

¹ Letter of December 7, 1506. Gregorovius, document 53.

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illustrious Lord my consort. But I neither find nor know that he has come for anything else, save to bring the news of my brother's liberation."¹

Alfonso was still with King Louis in the camp before Genoa, when the news reached Ferrara that Cesare Borgia was dead. He had met a soldier's death on March 12, 1507, in the service of the King of Navarre, falling into an ambush while assailing a rebellious vassal. Lucrezia was staying outside the city in Belriguardo when the news came; Fra Raffaello, who had preached the Lent, and the Cardinal Ippolito gradually broke it to her. "She showed great grief," wrote the Visdomino to his Signoria, "but with constancy and without tears."² Alfonso was much edified by the conduct of his wife and brother on this occasion:—

"We are beyond measure satisfied with what your most reverend Lordship has intimated to us, touching the notification of the fate of the Duke her brother to our most illustrious consort, it seeming to us that your Lordship in this has proceeded according to your natural prudence and experience. Likewise, we are much pleased that her Ladyship, our consort, has borne this calamity so patiently, as your Lordship tells us. This we attribute to your dexterity and virtue, and we thank you infinite times, for we are supremely satisfied and gratified with you in this matter."³

Lucrezia came into Ferrara, not to the palace, but to the convent of the Corpus Domini, where she kept in retreat for a few days, in continual prayer and religious offices for her brother's soul. The faithful Ercole Strozzi addressed

¹ Letter of January 15, 1507. Gregorovius, document 55.

² Sanudo, *op. cit.*, vii. col. 56.

³ Letter of April 27, 1507, to the Cardinal Ippolito, from the royal camp at Genoa. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*.

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to her his funeral poem on Cesare's death, of which one passage will serve as an example :—

Indulge lacrymis ; tibi, Borgia, iusta dolendi
Causa : tuæ primum gentis decus occidit, ingens
Pace, ingens bello, frater tuus, ardua cuius
Gloria Caesaribus par reque et nomine magnis.
Occidit heu multo confossus vulnere ; teque
Di vetuere pia frigentia lumina dextra
Claudere, et exhalantem animam legere ore propinquo,
Et lacrymis vastos plagarum abstergere hiatus,
Condereque immensis caros ululatibus artus.
Et iam quisque audet tanto dare frena dolori.¹

At the end of April, Genoa had surrendered to the Most Christian King ; early in May, Alfonso returned to Ferrara. For the rest, this was a gloomy year in the city. The grief of the Duchess infected the Court ; the pestilence returned, “ and wrought great damage and much slaughter.”

Things seemed brighter with the opening of the new year. The carnival of 1508 was rich in dramatic representations in the palace of the Estensi. On the evening of February 13, a dramatic eclogue, composed by Ercole Pio at the instance of the Cardinal Ippolito, was exhibited in the Sala Grande. The Duke and the Cardinal were there, both masked, and Lucrezia herself, surrounded by the ladies of her Court. Enamoured shepherds strove together in song, contended

¹ “ Give way to tears ! A just cause, Borgia, hast thou for grief. The chief pride of thy race has fallen, thy brother, mighty in peace, mighty in war, whose arduous glory is equal both in deed and in name to the great Caesars. Alas ! he has fallen, pierced with many wounds ; and thee the Gods have forbidden to close his dying eyes with loving hand, and to gather his passing soul upon thy lips, and with thy tears to wipe his gaping wounds and with immense lamentation bury his dear limbs. And now all dare give rein to so great a sorrow.” *Caesaris Borgiae Ducis Epicedium per Herculem Strozam ad divam Lucretiam Borgiam*, pp. 30v–38v of Aldo's edition of the two Strozzi.

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for or against the whole race of the daughters of Eve, singing the praises of the famous ladies of the olden time and, of the moderns, the three who now held the chief place—"one upon the Eridanus, another upon the Mincius, and the third near the Metaurus"; to wit, Lucrezia, Isabella, and the Duchess Elisabetta of Urbino. Then other shepherds and hunters appeared, singing the praises of the "Diva Borgia." The time was past for mourning and sorrow; let them offer sacrifice to the goddess Pallas for the conservation and increase of their flocks, and to the goddess Borgia "that she might protect them and commend them to her divine Alfeo." Then Ippolito's tumblers performed; his lute-players and singers hymned the "Diva Borgia" again; scented incense was thrown upon the sacrificial fire, and the whole thing ended in a dance. "And I went home, nor do I think that there was much dancing, because it was near on the third hour of night, the time that each one has to be home to supper at his own house."¹

Three more eclogues of the same kind were represented on March 8, but appear to have been less successful. One by Antonio dall'Organo, ordered by the Duke, was thought over-jocose and to contain things unsuitable for this sort of performance; the second, commissioned by Lucrezia herself from Tebaldeo, presented the fable of Daphne turned into laurel, "the which, apart from the elegance and *gentilezza* of the verse and its good *sentenzie*, was not much commended," and apparently found incomprehensible; the

¹ Letter of February 14, 1508, from Bernardino de' Prosperi to Isabella. Luzio and Renier, *Urbino e Mantova*, pp. 317-319. The eclogue has not been preserved. Ercole Pio was a son of the famous Marco and brother of the witty Emilia, dear to Isabella d'Este then and to every reader of the *Cortegiano* now.

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third, by a poor Greek who was of the household of Ercole Strozzi, failed completely, because it lacked the moralities and intrigues of comedy. And, verily, this courtly audience had had, a few days before, some experience in the *moralità* and the *astuzie* of comedy—in the shape of the *Cassaria*, the first extant comedy of Ariosto himself.

“On Monday evening,” writes Bernardino de’ Prosperi to the Marchesana Isabella on March 8, after describing the failure of the three dramatic eclogues that had been represented on that day, “the Cardinal had a comedy performed, which was composed by Messer Lodovico Ariosto, his *famigliare*, and rendered in the form of a farce or merry jape, the which from beginning to end was as elegant and as delightful as any other that I have ever seen played, and it was much commended on every side.” The music, and especially the wonderful scenery painted by the Duke’s Court painter, Pellegrino da San Daniele, were greatly admired.¹ The *Cassaria* in this, the earlier of the two versions, is all in prose with the exception of the prologue. In its characters and plot, it is a free imitation of the classical Latin comedies; it is a rollicking piece of work, full of comical intrigue and cross-purposes, while the love-sick youths, Erofilo and Caridoro, with their sharp-witted knavish servants, contrive to rescue the two captive girls, Eulalia and Corisca, from the clutches of the vile pander Lucrano, and to involve the rich old merchant, Crisobolo, Erofilo’s father, in their devices.

Although a little later the Court was again in mourning—this time for the death of Cesare’s former enemy, the

¹ Cf. L zio and Renier, *La Cultura e le Relazioni Letterarie d’ Isabella d’ Este*, ii. 2, pp. 208, 209; Campori, *Notizie per la Vita di Lodovico Ariosto*, pp. 48, 49.

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good Duke Guidobaldo, who died at Urbino in March and was succeeded by Francesco Maria della Rovere—fortune seemed, for the rest, about to smile upon the House of Este this spring. Rome and Venice were friendly. Pope Julius conferred upon Alfonso the Golden Rose. There had been some misunderstanding between the Duke and the Most Serene Republic; so, on April 3, he went to Venice from Francolino with his flotilla of boats, great and small, *familiariter*, to justify himself. At Venice he heard the news of the birth of a son and heir. On April 4, Lucrezia was delivered of a boy to whom the name Ercole was given, in memory of his paternal grandfather.

Ercole Strozzi was well to the fore, and hailed the auspicious event in his *Genethliacon*, a long and enthusiastic poem in elegiac verse, in which the glories of the Houses of Aragon, Este and Borgia are all united round the cradle of this future hero:—

Cresce Deūm soboles, et avi benefacta paterni
Herculis, ut sacro nomen ab amne, refer.
Excitet, Alphonsusque atavus proavusque Ferandus,
Summus Aragoniae splendor uterque domus.
Et magnis stimulet te Caesar avunculus actis,
Grandeque Alexander sit tibi calcar avus.
Hi tibi Scipiadas referunt, referuntque Camillos,
Quosque tulit claros terra Pelasga duces.¹

Hardly had the rejoicings for the birth of young Ercole

¹ "Grow up, offspring of the Gods, and bring back the good deeds of thy father's father, Hercules, as thou dost his name from a sacred stream. Let thy forefathers Alfonso and Ferrante inspire thee, each a supreme glory of the House of Aragon. May thy uncle Caesar stimulate thee by his mighty exploits, and thy grandfather Alexander be to thee a great spur. To thee these bring back the Scipios, bring back the Camilli, and those famous captains whom Greece bore." *Genethliacon*, pp. 53-56 of Aldo's edition.

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died away, than a mysterious horror fell upon the Court, the mystery of which has not yet been fully explained. It must, as Gregorovius notes, have reminded Lucrezia of the tragical end of her own brother, Juan of Gandia.

There lived at Ferrara a certain Barbara Torelli, daughter of Marsilio Torelli, the beautiful young widow of Ercole di Sante Bentivoglio. Her married life had been a tragedy from first to last; Ercole Bentivoglio, who had served the Republic of Florence and Cesare Borgia as condottiere, was a harsh and brutal soldier, while she was delicately nurtured and highly cultured, a poetess of no mean achievement in the vernacular. She had been wrongly accused of adultery and of attempting her husband's life by poison, while living at Urbino; and, although she had come triumphantly out of the ordeal, the latter had induced Duke Ercole to help him in taking his daughter Costanza out of her hands.¹ On the death of her husband, Barbara had retired to Ferrara, the native city of her father's family, where she took part in the life of the Court and shone in its literary society. Lovers and admirers gathered round her; it was whispered that Ercole Strozzi and a mysterious "personage of high rank" were rivals for her favours. Since she preferred the vernacular to Latin, Strozzi laid aside his wonted classical style and sang her praises in Italian sonnets. One of

¹ Cf. Letter of July 20, 1501, from Silvestro Calandra at Urbino to the Marquis of Mantua (D' Arco, *Notizie*, pp. 248, 249); letter of May 10, 1504, from Ercole Bentivoglio to the Duke of Ferrara (Dallari, p. 223). In a curious little note, apparently to the Duchess of Urbino, May 21, 1502, the Duke (Ercole) says that, to please her Ladyship, he has been content that Madonna Barbara should stay for a few days in the convent of S. Maria delle Grazie, but she has been staying too long, and, her presence being very inconvenient to the nuns, she must be taken away at once. Archivio di Modena, *Minutario Cronologico*.

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these at least, the lover's longing for the sight of his beloved when absent from her presence, has a touch of real passion:—

O beato pensier, ch' a ogni tua voglia,
 Per aspri monti e profonde acque, torni
 A Madonna, e con lei parli e soggiorni,
 E godi 'l ben che di se 'l mondo invoglia;
 Deh! perchè teco la gravosa spoglia
 Non può volar a que' duo lumi adorni,
 E seco, come tu, star notti e giorni,
 Benchè più presso a lei senta più doglia?
 Esser questo non può: dunque il cor pensi;
 Nè perchè altrove miri, altro mai veggia,
 E ogni sua forza nel pensar dispensi;
 Chè oltra 'l piacer che ha quando 'l corpo veggia,
 Fansi gli spirti nel pensier sì intensi,
 Che 'n sogno col suo ben sempre vaneggia.¹

Several other pieces in the vernacular have been preserved which appear to be his; they have somewhat slight poetic merit;² but the lame, perfumed Court poet did not, therefore, sigh in vain.

¹ "Oh blessed thought, that at every wish of thine, over steep mountains and deep waters, dost return to my lady and speak and dwell with her, and enjoyest the bliss that makes itself the world's desire;

"Ah! why cannot the irksome body fly with thee to those two beauteous eyes, and with her, like thee, stay nights and days, although nigher to her it feels more pain?

"This cannot be. Let then my heart muse. Nor though gazing elsewhere may it ever see aught else, and all its power may it use in thought;

"For, beyond the delight it hath when the body sees, the spirits in thought become so intense that in dream it ever dallies with its bliss."

² There are four sonnets, including the one quoted (in which I have ventured to correct an obvious error and read *star* for *stai* in the seventh line), ascribed to Ercole Strozzi in the *Rime scelte dei Poeti Ferraresi*, pp. 53-55. One of them, "Euro gentil, che gli aurei crespì nodi," has also been attributed to Baldassare Castiglione.

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On May 24, Ercole Strozzi and Barbara Torelli were privately married. Shortly afterwards, she gave birth to a daughter, to whom the Marquis of Mantua promised to stand as godfather. On the night of June 5, Ercole rode out, mounted on a mule, unattended, *a pigliare un poco di fresco*. He never returned alive. In the morning his body was found, covered with stabs and with the throat cut, a short way from his own house in the middle of the street near San Francesco; he was wrapped up in his cloak, his hat upon his head and his crutch lying by his side; and, as there was no blood to be seen, it was concluded that he had been brought dead to that place. "No one named the author of the assassination," says Giovio, grimly and significantly, "because the Podestà kept silence." Although justice was rigorously enforced in Ferrara, no investigation of any sort was made to find out the perpetrators of the bloody deed.

Later writers have been unanimous in recognizing that the blow came from the Castello, and that the Duke himself was at least privy to the murder. For some, the motive is found in Ercole's familiarity with the Duchess Lucrezia; for others, perhaps more plausibly, in Alfonso's own lust for Barbara Torelli. But the inscrutable despot kept his own counsels; none dared question, nor name the doer of the deed; even members of the Duke's own family seem to have been uncertain, and suspicion for a while fell—we do not know why—upon Alessandro Pio of Sassuolo, the husband of Angela Borgia.¹ Nevertheless, the silence of the Court

¹ On June 30, Girolamo Mugiasca, writing from Bologna to the Cardinal Ippolito, says that public report named Alessandro da Sassuolo as the cause of Ercole's death, but that suspicion had been thrown upon Masino dal Forno (Cappelli, *op. cit.*, p. lxiii. note 4).

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tells its own story. It was in vain that, on June 8, Guido and Lorenzo, the brothers of the murdered man, together with the widow, announced the fatal event by letter to the Marquis of Mantua, hoping, they said, that he would take vengeance upon him who had slain so very faithful a servant of his, as on their side they would not fail. These were mere idle words. To Barbara's renewed appeal, the Gonzaga coldly answered that he was very sorry for the unfortunate occurrence, "the unhappy fate of the late Messer Ercole, the consort of your Magnificence," which had deprived him of an affectionate friend; that he would continue to treat those that Messer Ercole had left with the same love that he had borne to Ercole himself; and that he would send Antonio Tebaldeo to represent him as godfather at the child's baptism, according to his promise. "For the rest, we offer ourselves for the services of your Magnificence, for the love that we bore to the deceased."¹

This Masino was one of Alfonso's favourite officers. In his letter of June 6 to Isabella, telling her of what had happened, Bernardino de' Prosperi gives no hint of the murderer (Luzio and Renier, *La Coltura, etc., d' Isabella d' Este*, ii. 2, p. 235). The silence of Pistofilo, the murdered man's brother-in-law, is highly significant. Simone Fornari of Reggio, almost a contemporary (*Sposizione sopra l' Orlando Furioso*, Florence, 1549, pp. 690, 691), and Lorenzo di Filippo Strozzi (*Vite degli uomini illustri della Casa Strozzi*, pp. 77, 78), who had been present in his youth at the marriage of Alfonso and Lucrezia, openly accuse the Duke. At the beginning of June, the Visdomino, Francesco Orio, was absent from Ferrara so we have no hint in Sanudo's *Diarii* as to how the tragedy was regarded at Venice. On the whole, we must conclude that, had a Dante of the Cinquecento met Ercole Strozzi on the shores of Purgatory, he would probably have heard the same words as Jacopo del Cassero uttered to his predecessor: *Quel da Este il fe' far* (*Purg.* v. 77).

¹ Luzio and Renier, *op. cit.*, ii. 2, pp. 235, 236. The Marchese's letter is dated July 10, 1508.

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Pietro Bembo and Aldo Manuzio offered up poetic tributes at the tomb of the murdered man ; Ariosto himself wrote his epitaph—eight somewhat frigid and conventional lines of elegiac verse.¹ The hapless widow alone dared to speak what was in her heart, in a sonnet which, among the lyrics of the age, stands alone in its fire and pathos :—

Spenta è d' Amor la face, il dardo è rotto,
 E l'arco e la faretra e ogni sua possa,
 Poi ch' ha Morte crudel la pianta scossa,
 A la cui ombra cheta io dormia sotto.
 Deh ! perchè non poss' io la breve fossa
 Seco entrar dove hallo il destin condotto,
 Colui che appena cinque giorni e otto
 Amor legò pria de la gran percossa ?
 Vorrei col foco mio quel freddo ghiaccio
 Intepidire, e rimpastar col pianto
 La polve e ravvivarla a nuova vita ;
 E vorrei poscia baldanzosa e ardita
 Mostrarlo a lui, che ruppe il caro laccio,
 E dirgli : Amor (mostro crudel !) può tanto.²

Shunned and neglected by all, Barbara fled from Ferrara to Venice, taking with her some of Strozzi's illegitimate children as well as her own little daughter. " One for fear,

¹ *Carm.* iii. 7.

² " Quenched is Love's torch, his arrow is broken, and his bow and quiver and all his power, since cruel Death hath shaken the tree beneath whose shadow I slept in peace.

" Ah ! why cannot I enter with him into the narrow grave whither destiny has brought him, him whom scarcely thirteen days Love bound before the great stroke ?

" Fain would I with my fire warm that cold ice, and remould the dust with my tears and revive it to new life ;

" And then, daring and fearless, would I show it to him, who broke this dear bond, and tell him : Thou cruel monster, Love has this much power."

This sonnet, which was first published by Baruffaldi in the *Rime scelte dei Poeti Ferraresi*, p. 55, has in the second quadernario a designed echo of the sonnet, already quoted, that Strozzi had written to the poetess herself.

DUKES AND POETS IN FERRARA

another for personal interest," she wrote to the Marquis of Mantua, "not any one has been found to defend his good memory nor his children, save myself, as is my duty. I thought, since I kept silent about my harsh fate, that my horrible misfortune would have been enough to excite compassion; but I find myself more molested and persecuted than ever."¹

With the death of Ercole Strozzi, the brilliant group of poets and men of letters, that had gathered round the Court and person of the late Duke Ercole, practically came to an end. Niccolò da Correggio had died at the beginning of the previous February, neglected and in some disgrace with Alfonso, who on his death took back the palace of Don Giulio which had been ceded to him in 1506 and in which he had ended his days.² But the loss of these two poet courtiers, who had been the life of so many past festivities, seems to have shed no gloom over the carnival of 1509 in Ferrara, when Lodovico Ariosto made an even more palpable hit than in that of the previous year, by the production of his new comedy, the *Suppositi* or "Substituted," in its earlier prose form.

¹ Letter dated Venice, March 17, 1509. Published by Luzio and Renier, in the *Giornale Storico della Letteratura Italiana*, xxxvi., p. 249 note. Cf. Bertoni, *La Biblioteca Estense*, pp. 169, 170. Barbara even appealed to Duke Alfonso himself on behalf of Strozzi's son Cesare.

² Writing to Isabella, Bernardino de' Prosperi says that his end has been hastened by his "grief and melancholy at seeing himself once great and now cast down." Luzio and Renier, *Niccolò da Correggio*, ii. pp. 74, 75. In May, 1507, Alfonso had been compelled by the Pope to take back certain possessions from Niccolò, and restore them to their former owners, the Succi of Brescello. This affair—concerning which are two letters of May 30 and 31 from Alfonso to Ippolito, in the Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*—was perhaps the cause of Niccolò's disgrace.

THE END OF THE HERCULEAN AGE

In the prologue, which Ariosto himself recited and which, we must add, is disfigured by the obscene play on words that the corrupted taste of the age more than tolerated, the poet confesses to have followed Plautus and Terence, but only in the way of poetical imitation. Nevertheless, as Bernardino de' Prosperi noted in giving his account of the performance to the Marchesana Isabella, the play was "an entirely modern comedy."¹ Instead of a Greek town in some vague classical epoch, the scene is laid in Ferrara itself in the last decade of the fifteenth century. Instead of the sharp-witted slaves and their knavish pranks, we see the students and doctors of the Studio in their long gowns; merchants from Siena or Catania land at the quay, and pass up those very streets through which we wander to-day; there are modern japes at the expense of the corrupt ducal officials and the aggressive custom-house functionaries, though, of course, it is expressly stated that "we have, above all, a most just prince." In a word, notwithstanding a few motives and situations lifted from Terence and Plautus, we have, for the first time, a comedy of Italian life, several years before Machiavelli had composed his *Mandragola*.

With the representation upon the Ferrarese stage of the *Cassaria* and the *Suppositi*, the first regular Italian comedies upon classical models, the work of Duke Ercole in the renovation of the Italian drama may be said to have been completed. And, indeed, with this carnival of 1509 the golden age of Ferrara ended. A period of strife and disaster was about to set in. "It was a time," writes D'Ancona, "not of comedies, but of effective and real tragedies; and all Italy, especially the valley of the Po, was the scene of

¹ Letter of February 8, 1509. Campori, *op. cit.*, pp. 50, 51.

DUKES AND POETS IN FERRARA

them.”¹ In these the Duke Alfonso and the Cardinal Ippolito, as also in his degree Ariosto himself, were to play their parts. Belying the promises which he had made to the House of Este, Pope Julius was to make a furious beginning of that relentless struggle between the Papacy and the Estensi, which only ended under the pontificate of Clement VIII with the incorporation of Ferrara into the territories of the Church. As for the two hapless sons of Ercole in the Tower of the Lions, Don Ferrando outlived Ippolito and Alfonso, and died in his prison in 1540. In 1559, more than half a century after the conspiracy, an old half-blind man appeared in the streets of Ferrara, clad in the costume of a bygone age. It was Don Giulio d’ Este, released from his captivity at the accession of Alfonso’s grandson—that second Alfonso after whose death the sovereignty of the House of Este in Ferrara was to come to an end.

¹ *Origini*, ii. p. 394.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

Unedited Poems of the Borsian Epoch

WHILE the courtly poetry that flourished in Ferrara during the reign of Duke Borso was mainly Latin, there was a certain amount of verse written in the vulgar tongue. The *Canzoniere* of Matteo Maria Boiardo, written, as we saw, in the last years of his reign, is the supreme example. Most of the minor poetry of this kind seems to lie still unedited on the shelves of the Italian libraries—a striking poem to a dead wanton by Andrea da Basso (in the *Rime scelte dei Poeti Ferraresi*) being one of the few exceptions. The two manuscripts of vernacular Court poetry, which I am about to describe, are both, as far as I know, unpublished.

In the library of the Vatican (*Biblioteca Vaticana, Cod. Capponiano, 219*) is an anonymous Triumph of Duke Borso, in six cantos in *terza rima*, somewhat in the spirit of the painted laudations of the Duke and Duchess of Urbino, Federigo da Montefeltro and Battista Sforza, by Pietro de' Franceschi in the Uffizi. The first canto opens :—

Tutto il mondo non ha il più sciocho ingiegnio
del mio nè le più ruvide parole,
nè di trattar gran cose homo men degno.

But his friend and gossip, Monsignor Hermolao, has suggested this great subject to the writer :—

Il magnanimo Borso mia dolce escha,
cibo da satiar ongni poeta,
di sua virtù mio canto tutto invescha.
E materia mi da sì piana e queta
da cantare, offerendomi se stesso,
che tutta la mia mente ne fi leta.

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Denanzi agli occhi me lo veggio messo
tra quattro donne belle e valorose
che in compagnia van sempre con esso.

Un ghambo d'or da quattro preciose
gemme con perle grosse, tonde e lustre,
ornato pare come Dio il compose.

Quanto egli sia glorioso e illustre
per queste donne et altre sue seguace,
tu, sagro Apollo, chiaro me lo mustre;
e come summamente egli ti piace,
così piacere a me fai sua virtute
degnia dil lauro tuo verde e vivace.

* * * *

A noi non so ben dir come nè quando
giamai potesse alguno esser satullo
così profondo thema predicando.

Vengha Virgilio e Flacco e il mio Catullo,
e quello che Peligno tanto honora,
e Gallo con Propertio e con Tibullo,
e tutti sette insieme caccian fora
ciò che hanno detto poetando loro
e quel che se describe de hora in hora,
che mai non mostreranno tal lavoro
qual si farebbe di costui che è degno
d'esser lodato in l'alto concistoro.

O conveniente a glorioso ingiegnio
materia, come pati tanto torto,
quant' io te facio essendo di te indegnio!

These four ladies who ever accompany Borso are, of course, Prudence, Fortitude, Justice and Temperance, with their attendant virtues, a canto being devoted successively to each. Prudence goes in front of him (canto ii.), with certain "fanciulle nobile e legiadre" under her charge—to wit, Reason, Understanding, Science, Knowledge, Industry, Art, Election, Counsel, Experience :—

In questo modo dil suo amore accese
Madonna il mio signiore inclyto ducha,
che esser chiamato già solea Marchese.
Perciò convien che la sua fama lucha
e che splendor per l'universo spanda,
sì che se stesso in cielo se conducha.

On his right side goes Fortitude (canto iii), and with her are

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her handmaidens, Faith, Constancy, Perseverance, Courage, Loyalty and many more.

E così acompagniato se ne viene
a tanta perfetione de virtute
che ongniuno divo e semideo lo tiene.
Hor pensa quando in porto di salute
Egli sia gionto quale fi sua fama,
per la qual nulle lingue finno mute.
Continuamente il cielo a se lo chiama,
ma pur ne lo concede per molti anni
per contentar la nostra voglia e brama.
Foriano troppo ismesurati danni
gli nostri se ne fosse prima tolto,
e cason ne foria de eterni affanni.
Non mancho danno che se'l suo bel volto
Apollo nascondesse, ne fi alhora
quando costui serà da noi disciolto.
Ma la speranza ch'egli al men dimora
tra noi cento anni come il ciel permette
dil carcer di paura ne tien fora.

On the left side of the poet's *signior novello*, "ove se anida il core," always goes Justice (canto iv.). Temperance follows him step by step (canto v.), with her attendants: Magnificence, Liberality, Mansuetude, Modesty, Gravity and Courtesy, Continence and Purity:—

Tra queste donne va lo amato amante
posto nel mezo de le principesse,
modesto, iusto, pratico, e costante.

* * * *

Libero fi da ongni terrena peste
più che null' altro principe non sia,
chi voglia mie parole haver moleste.
Io non credo ad altrui far villania
per lodare costui che da splendore
a tutta la terrestre monarchia.

In the sixth and last canto, the poet once more professes his unworthiness and inability adequately to express the triumph and glory of Borso's state, and humbly craves to be taken into his service:—

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D'altronde mai non spero esser beato,
se non indi che fi se 'l mio destino
non mi è nemicho come sempre è stato ;
anci per dir più vero se 'l divino
iudicio non mi è contra per mia colpa,
ma sia pietoso al ciecho peregrino.
Come si sia me par che me si scolpa
l'una e l'altra nel cor speranza e fede,
ben che temerità forte me incolpa.
Chieggio per gratia in locho di mercede
dal mio Signior che tra soi più pusilli
servi me doni piccol locho e sede,
a ciò ch'io possa haver venti tranquilli
a la debile barcha del mio ingiegnio,
il qual convien che per lui sempre stilli.
Forse che 'l tempo mi farà più degnio
che hora non son di far di lui parola,
se de amarmi si scopre in algun segnio.
Altro ragionamento a la mia schola
non si farà che di sua gran virtute,
la fama chui per tutto il mondo vola.
Donemi pace e vita con salute
Iddio, sì ch'io mi possa prevalere
che le mie voci non staranno mute.
Il mio riposo, il mio summo piacere
serà di haver continuamente in mano
la cythra e di costui cantar potere,
ricontando con verso più soprano
che non fi questo, il qual par esser vile
perrò che in vero è troppo humile e piano,
gli soi meriti degni d'alto stile
e di prisco poeta laureato
e de ingiegnio mirabile e sottile.
Vengha sì come aspetto il desiato
tempo ch'io veggia la mia nave in porto,
sì ch'io me trovi stare in meglior stato ;
che non fi algun che me stimi esser morto,
come forse ad altrui par che hora sia,
essend' io da fortuna oppresso a torto.
Mi transporta a parlar la fantasia
de' fatti proprii più ch'io non vorrei,
Ma ritorniamo ne la dritta via.

He cannot express with words the immense glory of his Lord,
to which his universal popularity throughout the world bears

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testimony. Truth alone will defend his song and supplement all its deficiencies :—

Perciò il mio canto molto non si cura
 nè cercha di haver altra compagnia
 che sola veritade integra e pura.
 Costei mi segue e vien mecho per via,
 mentr' io vo dietro al mio signior cantando
 e mostro altrui sua gloria e monarchia.
 Di lui ragiono, e lei testificando
 conferma ciò ch'io dico e fanne fede,
 sì che da noi si sa busia haver bando.
 Al mio parere ongniuno ne lo crede,
 forse algun no, che per invidia privo
 dil lume il vero non discerne é vede.
 Ma priegho Dio che quello che hora scrivo
 mi presti un' altra volta miglior aso
 di replichar e mi mantengha vivo ;
 alhora moverò tutto Parnaso.

We have no clue to the identity of this poetic seeker for Borsian favours. At first sight, the reference to Catullus as *il mio Catullo* might lead to the hypothesis that he was a Veronese by origin, and the prayer for the *ciecho peregrino* imply that, like several other versifiers of the Quattrocento, he was physically blind. This would, however, be unduly stretching a point; the one allusion probably only means that Catullus was a special favourite with him (cf. the *il mio Tibullo* in the third sonnet by Nuvolone quoted below), and the other seems a mere metaphorical form of speech. We must, therefore, leave him for the present in his obscurity.

The case is very different with our next poet. Filippo Nuvolone was a Mantuan by origin. He was the son of that Carlo Nuvolone, whom we have already met in the circle of the Marchese Leonello among the interlocutors of Angelo Decembrio's *De Politia Litteraria*, and who was frequently employed in the service of the Estensi. Filippo studied Greek under Lodovico Carbone and Battista Guarini at the Studio of Ferrara; he seems to have divided his time between the Courts of Borso d' Este and Lodovico Gonzaga; the first Mantuan edition of the *Divina Commedia* was dedicated to him in 1472; and he died of

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the pestilence at Venice in 1478.¹ In the British Museum (*Additional MS.* 22,335) there is a manuscript of Italian lyrics, sonnets and canzoni, dedicated by Filippo Nuvolone to Alberto d' Este, the half-brother of Borso and Ercole.² It opens with a dedicatory canzone to Alberto, in which the lady of whom Filippo professes himself to be enamoured might be taken as Glory or Wisdom, but in the pieces that follow ("Sonetti e canzone morale e de amore de Filippo Nuvoloni compendiate a nome de lo illustre et excelso signore Alberto da Este") she appears manifestly to be a mortal woman. They are Petrarchan in sentiment and manner, copious in their parade of classical learning, but by no means devoid of charm. The four following will serve as examples:—

Quando la donna mia nel tempio adora
colui che la formò nel ciel sì bella,
rentuona fin la su la sua favella,
tal dolcezza escie de i suoi labri fuora.
El star suo grave allor ben me inamora,
quando devota veggio esser sì quella
che ogni virtute et honestà con ella
racolte paian tutte insieme allora.
Non miri adunque altrui se il contemplare
i suoi costumi e il suo gentile aspetto
mi strigne a far de ciò memoria eterna ;
chè quanto più ci penso più m'è accetto
el dir di lei : e al ciel sempre laudare
sua degna alta virtù, gloria superna.

¹ For Filippo Nuvolone, see Bertoni, *La Biblioteca Estense, etc.*, pp. 117, 124 and note.

² Alberto d' Este was the most "difficult" member of the House, and frequently on bad terms with his brothers. Borso exiled him in 1468 for accidentally killing a man in the ducal palace, but only for a short while. He was at first high in favour with Ercole, whose peaceful accession he had been instrumental in procuring; but in May, 1474, he was banished again, for refusing to go to greet a foreign prince at Modena, and his palace of Schifanoia was confiscated. While in exile, his obtrusive friendship with the fallen Duchess of Milan, Bona, caused a diplomatic incident with the Milanese State, and Ercole forbade him to visit her again, or he would not be responsible for the consequences (Letter of September 8, 1481. Archivio di Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*). But his loyalty during the war with Venice procured his pardon and restoration to Ferrara.

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Dolcie mio caro e pretioso fiore,
non ti debio io servir fino a la morte,
e farti un tabernaculo sì forte
che al mondo mai nisun ti spegna fuore ?
Poi che colei che in man tiene el mio cuore
mi ti donò per mia benigna sorte,
e se inclinaron sue belleze acorte
a farmi degno alhor di tanto honore.
Eschan le perle ; e spengansi i diamanti ;
e da me lenti e fugi ogni appetito
de haver di questo mai thesor più degno,
che par del Paradiso essere uscito.
O me felice sopra gli altri amanti !
O felice quel dì ! felice pegno !

Tal Dante non cantò per Beatrice,
nè Petrarca per Laura, nè Catullo
per Lesbia, nè per Delia il mio Tibullo,
nè tanto cantò Orpheo per Euridice,
nè tanto Ovidio per Chorina dice,
e al mondo mai per donna cantò nullo,
quanto io cantrò per debito e trastullo
di questa una celeste alma fenice.
E sua fama saglir fin sopra el cielo
faran mei versi ; sì che la natura
angielicha verrà quivi a mirarla ;
e mirata e coperta d'altro velo
la vederemo poi su repportarla,
cantando, osanna Dio, novella e pura.

Mentre, Madonna, gli è la età fiorita,
con tanta ligiadria, tanta bellezza,
gli sia la humanità, la gientileza,
la clementia e humiltate insieme unita.
Perchè vi troverete poi pentita
haver passato el fior de gioveneza,
e senza alchun piacere in la vechieza
esser venuta al fin di vostra vita.
Mentre adunque gli è el tempo e la stagione,
aime, Madonna, a voi mi rachogliete
nel seno vostro e ne le braza stretto.
Dolcie martiro e dolcie passione,
dolcie mal, dolcie doglia gustarete,
havere insieme al fin nostro diletto.

At the end of the collection, the poet addresses Duke Borso

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himself in an extended and highly curious canzone, describing to his Excellence his amorous torments and appealing to him for protection, as to one who is "vessel, harbour and true light of purity, and hostelry of all the virtues opposed to love."

Hor giunto in questa età florida e lieta,
che per el sangue calido che entro arde
convien l'huom la persona esercitarsi,
e lassar quella vita humile e quieta
del studio e di quelle opre lente e tarde,
e in destreza e in fatica adoperarsi,
cominziommi la mente allontanarsi
dal imparar da i libri e dal riposo,
e venni ardito al arte militante.
E lieto e iubilante
tolsi in man le arme presto e desidroso,
e quanto studioso
prima a i libri era, tanto a questo venni
che foggie ogni dì nuove erammi al petto,
e a ciò gran tempo io tenni
fin che altro pensier nuovo io me hebbi eletto.

Fatto el pensieri io venni a tua Eccellenza,
mansueta, pacifica e tranquilla,
nemicha de odio, di discordia e guerra,
armata di pietate e di clemenza,
che goza de iracondia in se non stilla,
in cui ogni bontà se include e serra;
dicendo enfra me stesso: Non è in terra
signor tanto clemente e tanto humano,
chome è questa alta iradiante faza;
e le arme e la choraza
offersi al tempio del bifronte Iano.
E a te, signor soprano,
venni dicendo: Io viverò sechuro,
nè più di Marte fia mio cuor seguace
nè de alchun caso duro;
ma senza noia e senza dubio in pace.

Aime, chi fa ragion si la fa tardo,
a farla senza chi gli sia propinquo
a fargli obietto, e che el contrario tegni;
chè giunto ch'io fui sotto el tuo stendardo,
credendo da nemichi esser longinquo
e da le insidie lor, da loro ingiegni,
pur allor mi trovai tra guerre e sdegni,

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tra mille spade, lanze, e mille strali,
tra mille punte penetrante al cuore,
tra tanto e gran dolore
e colpi innumerabili mortali,
che mai non tanti e tali
sentette corpo human nè sentirà mai,
chè una fiera crudel, selvaggia e pia,
co i suoi belli ochii e rai
legò secho el mio cuore e l' alma mia.

E se ella questi dua ne tirò secho
che sono i principal veri operanti
nel corpo nostro misero e terreno,
pensi qualunque qui quel che è più mecho,
poi che quelli ochii excelsi e córuschanti
traxeron questi del lor proprio seno,
perchè el bel viso angielico e sereno
non solo ha forza ne le humane cose
far arder sassi e il fuocho uscir de giazò,
e doglia esser solazo,
ma in le celeste incognite et ascose,
che 'l fier Marte ripose,
e Saturno se alegri e Iove imbruni;
e il Sol non schaldi; e Venere non splendi;
e la lingua se infuni
Mercurio; e Cinthia a pudicitia offendi.

Costei ha forza sopra el gran Cupido,
e sopra sua pharetra, arco e saette;
e nulla gli vale arma che egli adopri;
chè ella sempre è più fiera, e ha il cuor più fido
contra i colpi de amore, e lo submette;
e lui convien che giazà e che si chopri,
e se egli advien che in nulla se dischopri,
ella lo schaza, spigne e lo domina.
Cosa inaudita et admiranda e nuova,
che amor che ha fatto prova
e in la natura humana e in la divina,
si trovi hor resupina
sua forza e suo valor contra costei,
lui che ha vinto la terra e vinto el cielo,
e vinto homini e dei;
lei porti le arme, e lui sol porti el velo!

Costei mi crucia, lania, affligie, e snerba,
e in sì fieri tormenti ognihor me involve
che più riposo e gaudio è in lo Acheronte;

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e contra me sì dura e sì superba,
crudele e dira e immane si dissolve
che non mostrossi tal Iove a Phetonte ;
nè oscura al mondo mai se vide fronte,
palida et ignea, tenebrosa e tetra,
se non quando costei de ira si pascie,
e che dal cuor suo nasce
la crudeltà che in me spigne e penetra.
E quando ella si retra
dal cruciarmi, sto sì lasso e vinto
che meglio mi sarebbe un morir solo
che mille essere extinto,
e uscir di tanto affanno e tanto duolo.

Chè impossibile fia che huomo sofferri
tanta gran doglia quanta soffrischo io,
che ognihor si charcha in me, cumula e achrescie ;
e non sol suoi pungienti e mortal ferri
prova lo afflitto cuor laniato mio,
tinti in lo impio venen che di lei escie,
ma più me è a noia, duolmi e mi renchrescie,
che amore e lei coniuano a mei danni,
e armati contra me vengono in schiera ;
e una cosa è straniera,
che defender da dui nulla se affanni ;
e poi se amor gli inganni
voglia oprar contra questa e le arme torre,
perde sua forza ; e me crudel mi punge ;
sì che mal si sochorre
chi sol senza arme enfra dui armati agiungie.

De che, Signor mio, excelso inclyto Duce,
se probato è che pudicitia adunque
triumphi del amor chome si scrive ;
e tu sia vaso, porto, e vera luce
di pudicitia, e albergo di qualunque
virtù che ad amore obsti, spegni e prive ;
deh, schaza aime, Signor, queste nocive
fiere che induchon gli homini al morire ;
nè in tuo paese sia lo albergo loro ;
e inclinati, ch'io moro ;
e qui benigno vogliami exaudire,
et ultra el dolce udire
farmi ragion de questi mei nemichi,
sì ch'io possa sechuro ire in viaggio,
che amor nè lei mi dichi
nè mi fazi spiaciare, iniuria e ultraggio.

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Canzon, tu trovarai quello alto Ducha
che nel sangue da Este è un lume e un sole,
e che triumpha al charro in pudicitia;
e chiedigli iustitia
con ornate et humillime parole,
chome a signor si suole,
di tanta noia fattami e spiaciare ;
e poi che tu harai detto, a lui te achosta
e sta atento a vedere,
e aspetta sua humanissima risposta.

APPENDIX II

A Selection of Unpublished Documents

I

Pope Paul II to Borso, Duke of Modena.

ROME,

December 20, 1470.

DILECTE FILI SALUTEM, ETC.—Mestus ad Nos venit dilectus filius Jacobus Trotus orator tuus; et enarravit quam male de ipso sentias: quod scilicet in prosequendis iussis tuis minus effitiose sese apud Nos habuerit. Certe is egregie semper mandata tua executus est. Et id Nos scimus; et proinde testimonium perhibemus. Debes igitur tu illum carum habere: ut dignus est: nec eum qui de te benemeritus est ignominia afficere; quoniam graviter peccares, si faceres. At ille quisquis est qui Nobilitatem tuam tam male informavit, aut nescit veritatem rei et decipitur, aut unionem odit et malignatur. Nam, ut tu probe nosti, Nos ab initio Pontificatus Nostri semper omni studio atque conatu quesivimus unionem omnium Christianorum et presertim Italarum; ut impresentiarum enixe facimus. Demum vero iuvante Deo etiam cum onere Nostro intendimus ad unionem huiusmodi Italarum cito concludendam ita efficere, quod omnes plane intelligent quam recte paterne et secundum Deum progredimur. Sperantes nichilominus potentatus ipsos Italos Nos ut communem omnium patrem atque hanc Romanam Ecclesiam ut matrem prout est habituros, observaturos omnique presidio adiuturos, simulque abunde in communem Christianorum exercitum contra impiissimos hos canes Turchos comparandum contributuros, sicuti sepenumero Nobis polliciti sunt. *Datum Rome apud S. Petrum die xx Decembris, 1470, Pontificatus Nostri anno septimo.*

(Archivio Segreto della S. Sede, xxxix. 12, f. 58.)

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II

Pope Paul II to Borso, Duke of Ferrara.

ROME,

July 10, 1471.

DILECTE FILI SALUTEM, ETC.—Nuper in urbe Roma vulgabatur de tua Nobilitate nuntium admodum triste. Quod animum Nostrum valde angebat, et propter eam paternam caritatem, qua personam tuam amplectimur, et propter statum etiam tuum et tuorum, ac alia que pro tua prudentia potes intelligere; etiam id affligebat omnes tuos benivolos, qui etsi multi tibi sunt; habes et Nos ut tibi patrem benivolentissimum. Verum postea significatum est te, Dei beneficio, periculum evasisse, ex quo plurimum letitie accepimus. Hortamur autem te in Domino ut omni studio intendas ad confirmandam valitudinem: quo et tu tibi et tuis consolationi esse possis, etiam et Nobis propter Nostram erga te paternam benivolentiam. Ceterum misisti ad Nos donum locupletissimum usque adeo, sicut ei addi nichil potuisse videretur; habemus gratias tante huiusmodi largitioni tue, sed velle-mus Nobiscum egisses parcius, qui etiam dona accipere non solemus. Velit autem ipsa Nobilitas deinceps ad Nos dona non mittere, nisi cum et que petierimus; et in hunc modum animo desiderioque Nostro vehementer satisfacies. *Datum Rome apud S. Petrum die x Julii, 1471, Pontificatus Nostri anno septimo.*

(Archivio Segreto della S. Sede, xxxix. 12, f. 175v.)

III

Pope Sixtus IV to Giovanni Mocenigo, Doge of Venice.

BRACCIANO,

September 19, 1481.

DILECTE FILI SALUTEM, ETC.—Reddite Nobis sunt littere tue; ex quibus cognovimus quanta letitia tu et civitas ista affecti fueritis ob adventum dilecti filii Comitis Hieronymi nepotis Nostri eiusque consortis; quantoque honore eos exceperitis. Gratissimum fuit Nobis id audisse; tam etsi illud idem iam Nobis antea persuaseramus: novimus enim semper omni in re pre-

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cupiam tuam et istius inclyti Senatus erga Nos observantiam ac sinceram benivolentiam in omnes Nostros : quod et in hoc recognovisse letamur summopere tueque Nobilitati habemus gratias. Nos autem versa vice animum Nostrum erga te et ipsum Senatum ut optimum habemus ; ita etiam declarare et cupimus et parati sumus, si quando cognoverimus posse cum Deo et honestate vobis complacere. *Datum Braciani die xix Septembris, 1481, Pontificatus Nostri anno undecesimo.*

(Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze, Cod. II. iii. 256, f. 38v.)

IV

Pope Sixtus IV to Giovanni Mocenigo, Doge of Venice.

ROME,

November 17, 1481.

DILECTE FILI SALUTEM, ETC.—Accepimus litteras tuas, datas ultima octobris, quibus Nobis de reditu Nostro in urbem et incolunitate gratularis. Est id Nobis gratissimum. Cognoscimus enim ex precipuo tuo in Nos amore prodire : de quo magnas agimus tibi gratias ; et non minores pro his que tua Excellentia egit in seditione proxima Forliviense, que ita grata et iocunda Nobis fuerunt ut nihil addi posset : in quo tue erga Nos et Nostros omnes perpetue et constantis benivolentie signa, sepe ante comperta, clarissimis argumentis ostendit ; que etiam Comiti ipsi Hieronymo presenti declarasti, nam preter ea que intellexeramus per litteras suas ipse etiam sermone suo illa eadem apud Nos prosecutus est de summis honoribus a te ei exhibitis, pro quibus perpetuo tibi debebit. Quantum actinet ad honorem in hoc itinere Nostro impensum per Nos dilecto filio Francisco Diedo oratori apud Nos tuo, maiora ille fecit litteris suis quam erant, et plura merebatur quam pro tempore et locis prestari et exhiberi sibi potuerint ; sed pro sua modestia aliter non scripsisset, ut est vir singulari humanitate et peditus, qui sane res tuas ea diligentia et fide procurat ut maiori non posset, cum summa Nostra satisfactione. Cui Nos et tua contemplatione et suis precipuis meritis summe afficimur. *Datum Rome etc. die xvii Novembris, 1481, Pontificatus Nostri anno undecesimo.*

(Ibid., ff. 95, 95v.)

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V

Luca Pasi, detto il Faentino, to Duke Ercole of Ferrara.

ROME,

November 16, 1481.

ILL^{ME} PRINCEPS ET EX^{ME} DOMINE, ETC.—

Lo imbassatore di Vostra Excellentia insieme cum quelli di la Liga se partireno di qua a' xiv di questo per andare verso Napoli. Credo V^{ra} Ill^{ma} Sig^{ria} essere stata advisata da D. Christoforo suo oratore¹ quanto la Santità del Nostro Signore habia deto et dolutese di V^{ra} Sig^{ria} per le novità di Forlì, spinto perhò dal Conte Hieronymo; il quale tuttavia insta di tyrare il nostro Signore a nove trame. Ma credo che li serà difficile, benchè Sua Santità se mostri cusì bruscho nel parlare; et tanto meno anchora quando serà venuto il Cardinale di Santo Petro ad Vincula; il quale expectamo qua di proximo. Non scio se V^{ra} Ill^{ma} Sig^{ria} ha inteso a questi giorni passati di una certa ruggine et diffidentia sorta tra'l S. Duca di Urbino et il Conte Hieronymo; il quale ha facto grande instantia de rimuovere di qua D. Pietro Felice, imbassatore del prefato Duca; il quale perhò non l'ha voluto rimuovere. Intendo anchora tramarse parentela tra'l Signore di Arimino et il Conte per la mezenità de uno suo nipote et sorella del prefato Signore. Altro al presente non c'è di novo. Bene valeat Ill^{ma} D^{tio} V^{ra}, a la quale di continuo mi raccomando.
Rome, xvi Novembris, 1481.

E. V. Ill^{me} D.

Servulus Lucas Faventinus prothonotarius.

(R. Archivio di Stato in Modena, *Carteggio degli Ambasciatori—Roma.*)

VI

Pope Sixtus IV to Duke Ercole of Ferrara.

ROME,

April 18, 1482.

DILECTE FILI SALUTEM, ETC.—Scit Nobilitas tua que ad te superioribus diebus scripserimus, que oratori tuo totiens sig-

¹ i.e. Cristoforo de' Bianchi.

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nificanda commisimus, ut sublata de medio omni discordia in pace et amicitia cum Venetis perseverares, sicuti maiores tui fecerunt. Id ut tibi persuaderemus, multe Nos hortate sunt rationes: Italie quies, quam propter hoc violari nolebamus, incommodum quod civitati isti Nostre impendebat, singularis Nostra erga te caritas, quem nullo bello cum finitimis, et iisdem quidem potentissimis, implicari cupiebamus. Res autem quomodo processerint, nemo est qui te melius scire possit; hoc unum certe scimus, si paternis monitis Nostris fuisset obtemperatum, alio in loco res esset; et tamen utcunque sit, non desistemus etiam per presentes ad idem te hortari, paterno amore tibi suadentes, ut deposita penitus omni contentionis cogitatione humaniter et benigne te cum Venetis prestes; ea facias que ab initio tibi significavimus; belli consilia omittas, que non possunt nisi perniciose tibi et toti Italie esse, maxime cum intelligamus communem hostem Turcum magnam classem adversus Italiam ipsam comparare, quam si inter se dissentientem offenderit, cui dubium quin parvo negotio ea quam primum potiatur? Nam licet res in eo statu non sint in quo erant cum primum ad hoc salutare opus te monuimus, tamen non dubitamus, quin longe maiora ex humanitate quam acerbitate ab illis consequuturus sis; ad quos pariter quoque scribimus. *Datum Rome etc. die xviii Aprilis, 1482, Pontificatus Nostri anno undecesimo.*
(Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze, Cod. cit. ff. 217v, 218.)

VII

Duke Ercole of Ferrara to the Duchess Leonora.

ROCCA POTENTE,

May 24, 1482.

Sul hora del disinare hozi è gionto lo ill^{mo} S. Marchese de Mantua, et siamo stati insieme sua Sig^{ria} et nui cum lo ill^{mo} S. Duca de Urbino e questi altri conducteri; et trovemo le cose in tale dispositione et termini che habiamo ferma speranza de victoria.

Li galioni sono anche gionti et sono qui sopra le forteze un

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miglio, quali habiamo visti, et sono belli et bene forniti et a numero sono xi et uno gatto.

Havemo facto tribulare l'armata inimica hozi doppo disinare cum quelli cinque passavolanti che sono venuti da Ferrara ; in modo che la se ne è ritirata denanti da gli ochii et è descesa gioso disotto da la Puncta un gran pezo, et non credemo che la se aproximi in qua de questi dui zorni per il gran danno se gli è facto, et stimeno che molti homini de loro siano sta guasti et cusì una galea et molte barche et fuste per assai colpi che le colseno et investiteno. Cusì pregiamo Dio succeda ogni zorno, come speremo che farà de bene in meglio, et de questa zornata sapiamo che non se ne hanno a laudare.

Domane parendo cusì ad ill^{mo} S. Duca de Urbino se troveremo a cena a Ferrara, per che non ni è parso per hozi partirsi di qua.

Per Dio mandati victuaglia in abundantia et presto, che cusì bisogna.

Ex Rocha Potenti, xxiv Maij, 1482.¹

(R. Archivio di Stato in Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*.)

VIII.

Pope Sixtus IV to the Duke of Lorraine.

ROME,

November 4, 1482.

DILECTE FILI SALUTEM, ETC.—Ducale Dominium Venetorum mittet ad Nobilitatem tuam quemdam secretarium suum, qui tam Nostro quam eorum nomine nonnulla tibi exponet, honorem et utilitatem non mediocrem ipsi tue Nobilitati allatura ; super quibus hortamur plenam ei fidem velis adhibere. *Datum Rome etc. die iv Novembris, 1482, Pontificatus Nostri anno duodecesimo.*

(Archivio Segreto della S. Sede, xxxix. 15, f. 175.)

¹ On the previous day, May 23, Ercole had written to Leonora that that morning the enemy's army had come to Ficarolo, and that the fleet, *armata*, " si è presentata a la Puncta de Ficarolo " but had gone no further. Rocca Potente was near Stellata.

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IX

Pope Sixtus IV to Duke Ercole of Ferrara.

ROME,

December 13, 1482.

DILECTE FILI SALUTEM, ETC.—Fuimus omni tempore pacis servande studiosi, et si quando humani generis inimico instigante aliena culpa ad arma deventum est, statim omni affectu et vigili cura ad illorum sedationem consilia Nostra direximus, quod et nunc eo diligentius procuravimus, tuo et rerum Nostrarum instanti periculo admoniti. Nam et Nobilitati tue, quam paterna gratia benivole prosequimur, et civitati nostre Ferrariensi bella, devastationes, ac novissimam obsidionem ab hostibus tuis illatam molesto animo perferimus; et sicut, pacatis iam aliis Italie potentatibus et Nobis sancte pacis vinculo unitis, de necessariis tibi auxiliis providere cogitavimus, ita etiam dilectum filium nobilem virum Iohannem Mocenigo Ducem Venetiarum per litteras Nostras hortati sumus, ut ob Nostram et Sedis Apostolice reverentiam cuius loca leduntur et impugnantur, ab armis desistat ac pacem ipsam Nobiscum, restitutis hinc inde ablatis, amplectatur, neve tibi ac Sancte Romane Ecclesie de cetero infestus sit. In quo desideramus eius prudentiam iustitie et honestati acquiescere. Ut autem interim salubrius ac firmioribus presidiis tibi consulari, dilectum filium Nostrum Franciscum Sancte Marie Nove diaconum Cardinalem legatum Nostrum ad partes istas duximus destinandum, ut te et populos Nostros presentia sua consolari, ac spiritualibus et temporalibus favoribus, sicuti rei necessitas exegerit, promptius iuvare et reintegrationi status tui intendere possit. Amplectere, dilecte fili, bono ac memori animo gratiam Nostram, que quantum vires et auctoritas Nostra suppetent non patietur ut corruas. Audiet ipsum legatum Nobilitas tua, et arcana Nostri pectoris ex eo cognoscas ad defensionem et salutem ac reintegrationem tuam omnibus officiis aspirare. Erit tibi salus a Domino, et non prevalebunt in Nos consilia operantium iniquitatem. *Datum Rome etc. die xiii Decembris, 1482, Pontificatus Nostri anno duodecesimo.*

(Ibid., ff. 246, 247.)

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X

Pope Sixtus IV to the Citizens and People of Ferrara.

ROME,

December 13, 1482.

DILECTI FILII SALUTEM, ETC.—Excepimus gravi animi Nostri molestia que proximis diebus de civitatis et comitatus Nostri Ferrariensis incommodis et imminenti nunc obsidione renuntiata sunt; ac statim ut ingruentibus periculis occurreremus, adiunctis Nobis in vinculo sancte pacis aliis Italie potentatibus, hortati sumus etiam dilectum filium nobilem virum Iohannem Mocenigo Ducem Venetiarum, ut ab armis et impugnatione dicte civitatis Nostre desistat, et pacem hanc Nobiscum restitutis hinc inde ablatis amplectatur; in quo desideramus eius prudentiam paternis monitis Nostris et iustitie simul ac honestati acquiescere. Illud tamen in presenti rerum periculo Nos maxime consolatur ac recreat, quod et potentatum clarissime Lige Italice validissime vires continua subsidia sumministrant, et fideles animos vestros et in omne excidium paratos pro salute dilecti filii nobilis viri Herculis Ducis vestri audivimus; in quo fidem et devotionem vestram benedicimus, et in Domino plurimum commendamus. Nos quoque qui ad summittenda tam spiritualia quam temporalia auxilia, si opus fuerit, toto affectu cogitamus, et ea omnia propediem iuxta rerum exigentiam explicabimus, destinandum interim ad partes istas, et precipue ad civitatem ipsam Nostram Ferrariensem, duximus dilectum filium Nostrum Franciscum Sancte Marie Nove diaconum Cardinalem legatum Nostrum; qui Ducem, civitatem, et vos omnes Apostolice auctoritatis clipeo defendat, ac reintegrationi status dicti Ducis Ferrariensis intendat; intelligantque omnes Nos ipsum Ducem in peculiarem et amantissimum filium, et vos devotos Sedis Apostolice habere ac protectionis Nostre suffragiis adiuvandos, que omnia latius in ipsius Cardinalis adventu cognoscetis. Monemus vos, dilecti filii, et hortamur in Domino, ut bono animo sitis, et quod ad vos spectat de servanda Nobis ac Romane Ecclesie et Duci vestro civitate fidelibus et con-

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stantibus animis cogitetis ; in quo vos plurimum acceptos Nobis reddetis. *Datum ut supra.*

(Ibid., ff. 245, 246.)

XI

Pope Sixtus IV to the People of Reggio.

ROME,

December 14, 1482.

DILECTI FILII SALUTEM, ETC.—Destinavimus ad partes illas, et precipue ad civitatem Nostram Ferrariensem, dilectum filium Nostrum Franciscum Sancte Marie Nove diaconum Cardinalem legatum Nostrum ; ut sicut Nos, unitis hic Nobiscum in vinculo sancte pacis clarissime Lige Italice potentatibus, ad eius confirmationem et stabilitatem universalem, dilectum filium nobilem virum Iohannem Mocenigo Ducem Venetiarum hortati sumus, ut ab impugnatione dicte civitatis Nostre et dilecti etiam filii nobilis viri Herculis Ducis Ferrariensis se retrahat, arma deponat, pacem Nobiscum amplectatur et capta restituat ; ita idem legatus pro prudentia sua pacificationi omnium in partibus illis, quantum poterit, consulat et intendat ; et si hostium arma non destiterint, omnibus Ecclesie Romane viribus ad illorum retusionem et captorum recuperationem una cum dictis aliis potentatibus studiosissime insistat. Nos enim pro officio Nostro dicti Ducis auxilium Nostrum implorantis protectionem ita suscipere proposuimus, ut pro eius salute et status sui reintegratione omnia amantissime facturi simus. Hortamur et vos, ut Principi vestro fidem et devotionem debitas impendatis ; in quo quieti vestre consuletis, et Nostram ac Sedis Apostolice benedictionem et gratiam maximam consequimini. *Datum Rome etc. die xiv Decembris, 1482, Pontificatus Nostri anno duodecesimo.*

Simile Populo Mutinensi.

(Ibid., ff. 252, 253.)

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XII

Pope Sixtus IV to Duke Ercole of Ferrara.

ROME,

September 17, 1483.

DILECTE FILI SALUTEM, ETC.—Vidimus que ad Nos scripsit Nobilitas tua de invasione Stellate, et quomodo cum tuis qui in promptu erant illam e manibus hostium recuperaveris, quo fit ut sicuti ex periculi magnitudine commoti fuimus, ita vehementer simus letati de virtute tua et victoria subsecuta. Rem igitur hanc non negligendam existimantes, sicuti eam semper cordi habuimus, denuo ad confederatos Nostros efficacissime scripsimus, monentes et instantes, ut gentes necessarias ad te mittantur, sicuti per Ducem Calabrie ordinatum est; idque quam primum fiat considerata periculi magnitudine, dum tempus idoneum superest. Monuimus in hoc Comitem Hieronymum, Duci Mediolani scripsimus, ut pedites illos mittat, et de stipendio tam tibi quam vicario Nostro Faventino provideat; idem Florentinis, de his que attinent ad stipendium. Prefecto mandavimus ut statim cum suis gentibus equitet. Ducem quoque Calabrie de hoc admonuimus, et Regem hortati sumus, ut hos omnes incitet ad celeriter et in tempore omnia subministrandum. Speramus Deo adiutore omnia bene successura. Tu modo ut facis studio et vigilantia tua non desis, et si aliquid faciendum videatur ulterius Nobis significes, nam nihil omittemus quod per Nos fieri poterit. *Datum Rome, etc., die xvii Septembris, 1483, Pontificatus Nostri anno decimo tertio.*

(Ibid., xxxix. 16, ff. 22v, 23.)

XIII

Pope Sixtus IV to Count Girolamo Riario.

ROME,

September 17, 1483.

DILECTE FILI SALUTEM, ETC.—Scit Nobilitas tua ordinem datum a Duce Calabrie de gentibus ad presidium Ferrarie collocandis; et quoniam in ea omne periculum vertitur, et nihil animo Nostro

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magis insidet quam quomodo illius defensionis et conservationi intendatur, conquiescere non possumus quousque provisum illi fuerit, ut timere amplius hostium impetus et insidias nequeat. Movet Nos periculum ingens in quo proxime Stellata fuit, que parum abfuit quin ab hostibus caperetur, potitque fuissent ea hostes, nisi Dux Ferrarie celeri subsidio subvenisset; qua expugnata de Ferraria actum videri poterat. Quare Nobilitas tua quamprimum curet, ut ordo ille mittendarum illuc gentium executioni demandetur absque aliqua mora; ad Ducem Mediolani efficacissime scribat, ut stipendium quod Duci Ferrariensi per ipsum debetur mittat statim, sine quo ille non potest opera suorum uti aut eos instruere, et rebus imminentibus occurrere, et pedites quos debet propere mittat; persolvat etiam stipendium vicario Nostro Faventino, ut cum suis ille in tempore subvenire et necessaria auxilia prebere possit. Nos quoque ad illum et ad omnes confederatos Nostros oportune scribimus, quo in periculo sit res demonstramus, et nisi in tempore hec acta erunt, agi postea fortasse non poterunt. Prefecto quoque stricte mandavimus, ut statim cum gentibus suis illuc equitet; et Nobilitas tua suas mittat. Nam vix scribere possemus, quantum hec cura Nos angat et stimulet: nec immerito, cum nisi celeres provisiones fiant, in magno periculo res ille constitute sint. *Datum ut supra.*

(Ibid., ff. 23, 23v.)

XIV

Buonfrancesco Arlotti to Duke Ercole of Ferrara.

ROME,

August 12, 1484.

ILL^{MO} ET EX^{MO} MIO SIGNORE,—

A' x de questo per el cavallaro de V^{ra} Ex^{tia} apostata recevi la lettera vostra de' VII in substantia de avviso de la mutatione et varietà, repentine et voluntarose, achadute in campo da l' uno di a l' altro sopra le conditione ricordate et dimandate per l'oratore vostro, et demum li era la supplicatione quale haveva a fare al Papa per riparo et adiuto più che fusse possibile ad obtinere.

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La qual lettera ben studiando et ruminando, ecco in quella medesima hora de la vostra, sopravene una comune a noi oratori da quilli Signori de campo, pur de' VII como la vostra, de avviso de la pace conclusa et stipulata como viderà V^{ra} Ex^{tia} per la inclusa copia; et subito fuo posto ordine de andare la matina a comunicarla cum la Santità de Nostro Signore, per chè quest' hora de la venuta de le prefate lettere era tarda circa le XXIV. La matina io anticipai et fuo a pallatio dal Cardinale de S^{to} Georgio comunicando la prefata lettera et repetendo de l'altre prima ricevute, le quale sua S^{ria} R^{ma} volse legere et ben intendere, et ragionatoli di sopra lungamente, confessando de continuo per parere de Nostro Signore et suo la ignominia haveva questa pace, et torto vi era facto et la displicentia ne recevevano, dicendo che la verità era questa, che la Santità de Nostro Signore non potria essere meglio disposta como era anche stata per el passato a favorire le cose vostre, ma che'l se poteva dire che questa cosa gli fusse stata tolta fuori di mano, et altri havessino voluto fare al suo modo cum puoco respecto de Sua Santità et del Conte, et dopo li era stata portata a tempo et cum modo, quando non potevano fare altro, et che ben si era cognosciuto il tutto, et che'l S. Ludovico haveva voluto cussì, et lo ill^{mo} S. Duca de Calabria consentito, li quali erano Signori del campo, et bisognava havere pacientia: Hora mo che venuta questa lettera de la conclusione de la pace, essendoli intervenuto Mess. Jacobo Trotto¹ cum el mandato, rasonevole cosa è che'l debato de quelli capituli sporti per Mess. Jacobo nel suo memoriale habia preso asexto tra loro; sì che non bisogna per hora fare altra instantia cum el Papa el quale è molto indisposto, et basterà che'l se lega la lettera comune de la pace; presto haveriti anche vui dal vostro Signore avviso como habia facto Mess. Jacobo de queste conditione che erano in debato, et sempre se puoterà scrivere per el Papa, quando se intenda meglio, che a punctamento li sia stato facto etc. Et in questo ragionamento sopragiunsino l'altri oratori, et rasonato che se fuo un pocheto cum sua R^{ma} S^{ria} de questa pace se trasferissime ali pedi de la Beatitudine de Nostro Signore, admonendo-

¹ Jacopo Trotti acted as plenipotentiary for the Duke of Ferrara at the Congress of Bagnolo.

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ne prima S. S^{ria} R^{ma} che se sforzassimo essere brevi per la indispositione del Papa, che in vero è molto sbatuto dal male.

Presentati al conspecto di Sua Santità fuo lecta la lettera, de la qual como ho dicto qui inclusa serà la copia. Apresso subito senza troppo ciremonia, el Papa dixè : Messer Annello, el Re como el contento ? Alhora Mess. Annello tolto al improvista palpitando rispose, che questo medesimo adviso era andato a sua Maestà et che non sapeva che dire, se non che, possa che gli era intrevenuto el Duca de Calabria, sperava faria como farano l'altri Colligati. Similmente domandò a Mess. Zoan Angelo del Duca de Milano, como se contentava. Lui rispose, che per le rasone note a Sua Beatitudine la necessità era quella li haveva facto praticare et elligere questa parte de la pace, de la qual se contentava per men malo. Tertio anche dimandete al Fiorentino, el qual rispose che'l se remetteva, et del facto et de la contenteza, a suoi Ex^{si} Signori, da li quali non haveva adviso alcuno. Ultimo se voltete verso me, dicendo : Et el Duca de Ferrara, como se contenta lui de questa pace ? Io rispose : Beatissime Pater, el non bisogna dimandare de la sua contenteza, per chè Vostra Santità ni è molto ben informata, et de novo Sua Ex^{tia} lo scrive et ricorda che è malissimo contento, et sforzatamente li vene, parendoli li sia stata facta iniuria ne li modi tenuti nel praticarla, et iniustitia, che debba perdere el suo, abandonato da li suoi colligati contra capituli et instrumenti privati et publici ; tuttavia Sua Ex^{tia} benchè la fede, constantia et pacientia sua li habia poco giovato insino qui, faciano altri come se vogliano, lui delibera perseverare et procedere unitamente in omne cosa cum suoi colligati, como ha facto per el passato, et cussì quando loro vogliano et commandano a lui, è forza stare paciente, et se lo è vero che Mess. Jacobo habia consentito cum mandato et voluntate del Duca de Ferrara, niuno debbe però credere che quello Signore (se non sforzato) consenti al preiudicio manifesto del honore et rasone sue ; tuttavia coacta voluntas, voluntas est, etc.

Olduto che n'hebbe Sua Santità tutti, dixè : Nui cognoscemo la grande prudentia de la Maestà del Re, de quelli da Milano, Fiorentini et Duca de Ferrara, la experientia et sagacità de li Duchi de Calabria et Bari, quali sonno in facto. Se costoro tutti

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hano facto questa pace, consentito et iudicato essere la meglio parte ; Nui, che non havemo tanta prudentia et men experientia, li volemo seguire et conformarse cum loro, et piacene quello che a loro piace, como havemo facto ne la guerra ; la qual cum tanta nostra spesa havemo proseguito per salvare Ferrara et compiacere a la Maestà del Re et l'altri Colligati, et cussì eramo apti a perseverare. Ben ne dole, che non li sia più contento et satisfaction del Duca de Ferrara, ma possa che'l pare a chi ha praticato questa cosa essere cossì necessario et non potere fare altramente, Nui insieme cum quello Signore haveremo pacientia, et iudicaremo omne cosa essere per lo meglio permessa da Mess. Domenedio, a quo omnia bona et nulla mala. Et cum queste parole se levassimo da li santi pedi de Sua Beatitudine.

Signore : o fusse per la indispositione, o pur per che la materia non li fusse grata (che la indispositione ho veduto altre volte superarla) non mostrò mai Sua Santità nè in parole nè in gesti signo de piacere alcuno, anzi de dispiacere, et remanendo mi dieto, me dimandò Sua Santità stessa et dixè vi confortasse per sua parte havere bona pacientia, et che considerato la deliberatione et fermeza d'altri in questa parte V^{ra} Ex^{tia} se seria trovata sola et forse mal tractata, et pur che sia salva Ferrara el tempo porta cum se novi remedii et partiti. Io rispose che per parte vostra ringratiava Sua Beatitudine et basavagli li pedi de questa sua bona volontà et compassione vi portava, et che se hebbe mai lettere de desperatione et mala contenteza de V^{ra} Ex^{tia} erano queste ultime mandate a posta per un cavallaro, per che cum omne summissione et prostrattione ali suoi santi pedi lo raccomandava per che, havendo a lassare el Polesene ben contra sua voglia, al men li fussin acceptati alcuni capituli sporti per el suo oratore in campo, sopra de li quali senza vergogna quelli che fano per Venetiani hano variati da un dì a l'altro. Alhora Sua Beatitudine me interrompi, dicendo : Non dire più, che per lettere del Tolentino¹ et de l'oratore de Milano ho inteso el tutto, ma doppo che Mess. Jacobo Trotto ha consentito debbeno essere stati d'accordio. Io dixè : Pater Sancte, et per la indispositione

¹ Giovanni Francesco da Tolentino, the papal plenipotentiary at the Congress.

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et per il ricordo del Camerlengo sum contento essere breve et non dare molestia a la Santità Vostra ; ma non voglio tacere questo, de questa lettera comune, che ben se li dica *Intervenendo Mess. Jacobo Trotto per lo ill^{mo} S. Duca de Ferrara*, ho nota che non dice però *consentendo*, et un altra cosa, che ne la sottoscriptione non li è *Mess. Jacobo Trotto* ; cosa non ho voluto dire in pubblico cum li altri, ma ne resto tutto suspeso sino habia adviso da Ferrara ; anchela mia lettera è de' VII, como anche è la comune, benchè questo poteria acchadere per la distantia che è dal campo a Ferrara. Et cum queste parole me levai da Sua Beatitudine, la quale possa stavo a Roma non me parse mai cossì caduta ne la faccia. Et in gratia de V^{ra} Ill^{ma} S^{ria} me racomando. *Rome, xii Augusti, 1484.*

E. V. Ill^{me} D.D.,

Servitor B. Episcopus R.¹

(outside) Ill^{mo} P. et Ex^{mo} D^{no} D. Herculi Estensi Duci Ferrarie
D^{no} meo colen^{mo}. Ferrarie.

(R. Archivio di Stato in Modena, *Carteggio degli Ambasciatori—Roma.*)

XV

Duke Ercole of Ferrara to the Cardinal Ippolito d' Este.

FERRARA,

August 12, 1495.

DUX FERRARIAE, ETC.—Rev^{mo} et ill^{mo} d^{no} filio nostro dilectissimo D^{no} Hippolyto Cardinali Estensi etc. Salutem.

Voi dovetti credere che, amandovi come se conviene ad uno bono Padre, stamo continuamente in desiderio de sentire che de di in di faciati maiore profecto in boni costumi, et in quelle virtude che se apertengono ad uno che sia nostro figliolo, et che habia la dignità del cardinalato come haveti voi, la quale dignità principalmente ricerca religione et doctrina, et chi non ha queste doe

¹ i.e. Eiusdem Vestre Illustrissime Dominationis Ducalis, Servitor Bonfranciscus Episcopus Regiensis.

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parte non po essere reputato digno nè bono Cardinale. Unde ben che hor mai siti de tanto intellecto, che da voi medesimo ve doveresti excitare ; tutavia sapendo noi, forsi meglio che non credeti, li modi vostri et come spendeti il vostro tempo : perchè da alcuni mesi in qua ne havemo havuto pur qualche noticia, che non po essere non ni habia dato displicentia ; ni è parso per questa nostra paternamente racordarve et admonirve, che debiati dispensare il tempo vostro in modo che ni acquistati reputatione et laude, et non il contrario. Et credemo che sereti molto laudato se prima, non solamente ogni die direti l'officio a le soe hore debite et attentamente, ma etiam fareti che altri sapiano et vedano, che cussì lo diceti ordinatamente. Il medesimo dicemo, che vi redundarà in gloria, se ogni die attendereti a studiare et intendere qualche bona et digna lectione, et se anche ve exercitaretì et accommodaretì in dire et scrivere con qualche elegantia in Lingua Latina, perchè il culto divino et la doctrina con li boni exempli di la vita sono li precipui ornamenti de uno Cardinale, et fundamenti da conseguire ciò che honestamente se desidera ; et rendemosse certi che, dispartendo il tempo in queste cose, il ve ni avvanzarà tanto, che anche ve potereti pigliare de li piaceri honesti, et in casa et a la campagna, che ricerca la età vostra. Ma come è dicto, quando prima se attende a le prime doe principale cose, il se ne acquista tante laude et honore, che anche le altre cose non possono essere se non commendate ; et teneti mo per indubitato, che se temereti Dio, et l'havereti denanti a li occhi, tute le cose vostre ve prosperarano ; et quando ve lo domenticaretì, il se domenticarà de voi, et niuno vostro desiderio ve potrà succedere ; nì ve vedereti mai contento. Sì che ve exhortamo et pregamo, che per vostro proprio bene et honore, et per nostra singulare consolatione, attendiati a le virtude nel modo che havemo dicto : et per ogni altra via migliore ; che bene sapemo se voreti non vi mancharano boni coadiutori a dire bene l'officio, et anche preceptorì de bone lettere et doctrina. Cussì fatti come speremo in voi, che sempre da Noi siati benedecto.

Noi, per Dio gratia, siamo tuti sani, et il simile de voi desideramo :

Lo è vero che lo ill^{mo} Don Alfonso vostro fratello a questi die,

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essendo a Milano, se infirmete de alcune febre terzane, et fecesse condurre qui in nave dove lo è migliorato assai. Et bene valete.

Ferrariae, xii Augusti, 1495.

N. Bendede'.

(outside) Rev^{mo} et ill^{mo} D^{no}: filio nostro dilectissimo: D^{no}

Hip: Sancte Lutie in Silice Cardinali Estensi etc.

(R. Archivio di Stato in Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi.*)

XVI

Isabella d' Este Gonzaga to Duke Ercole of Ferrara.

MANTUA,

April 18, 1497.

ILL^{mo} ET EX^{mo} SIGNOR MIO PADRE,

Li figlioli de quondam S. Messer Nicolò da Este me hanno exposito havere inteso che la Ill^{ma} Sig^{ria} V^{ra} in questa sua limitazione ha anche cassa la provisione che per sua bontà gli deputoe li anni passati, la quale era tutta la substantia de la vita loro, per non havere altra facultà; et cum molte prece me hanno pregata li raccomandandi a V^{ra} Ex^{tia}. Io che li cognosco in extrema miseria non ho saputo negarli questa mia; per la quale quanto più posso ge li raccomando, supplicandoli che per amore de Dio voglia lassarli correre la provisione sua: che la non poteria fare maggiore elimosina; et io l'haverò de singulare gratia da V^{ra} Ill^{ma} Sig^{ria} a la quale me raccomando.

Mantue, xviii Aprilis, 1497.

Ill^{me} D.V.

Filia Isabella Marchionissa Mantue.

(R. Archivio di Stato in Modena, Cancelleria Ducale, *Lettere di Isabella d' Este Gonzaga.*)

XVII

Duke Ercole of Ferrara to Don Giulio d' Este.

ADRIA,

January 7, 1498.

DUX FERRARIAE, ETC.—Ill^{mo} et Rev^{do} filio nostro dil^{mo} D^{no} Julio Estensi: Salutem. Per una vostra de' xx del passato,

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havemo inteso le visitatione facte per voi al Ill^{mo} et Rev^{mo} Mons^r Vicecancellero,¹ et al Rev^{mo} Mons^r San Severino. Il tuto ni è molto piaciuto, et ve ne commendiamo grandemente, stringendovi ad governarvi cum discretione et prudentia in ogni loco et tempo, et cum ogni persona; et al stare assiduamente a la presentia del Rev^{mo} Monsignor nostro figliolo: chè cussì facendo ni conseguireti commendatione et honore.² Et bene valete.

Adriani, vii Januarii, 1498.

Thebaldus

(outside) Ill^{mo} et rev^{do} filio nostro aman^{mo} D^{no} Julio Estensi, Romae.

(R. Archivio di Stato in Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*.)

XVIII

Duke Ercole of Ferrara to Don Ferrando d' Este.

FERRARA,

April 19, 1499.

DUX FERRARIAE, ETC.—Ill^{mo} filio nostro aman^{mo} D^{no} Ferdinando Estensi.

In questa nostra andata a Venesia, havemo dato il laudo et sententia sopra le differentie de Pisa per il modo che dovereti havere veduto per la copia de epso laudo; la quale a questa hora doveti havere havuta per la via de Messer Manfredo nostro oratore a Fiorenza. Et veramente in questa praticia de accordo et cussì nel sententiare, se siamo sforzati de fare tuto quello beneficio che havemo potuto a quella magnifica comunità de Pisa: sì per reverentia de la Ill^{ma} Sig^{ria} de Venesia che l'havea in

¹ The Cardinal Ascanio Sforza.

² In the light of after events, this bidding Giulio be assiduous in attending upon the Cardinal Ippolito is invested with a sort of horror. In a letter to his father, dated January 13, 1503, Ippolito assures his Excellence that he need not remind him to keep a look out for Giulio's interests at the Papal Court, because he always cares for them as though they were his own: "Persuadasi Quella che ne le cose del S. Don Julio non vegio meno che ne le mie proprie" (R. Archivio di Stato in Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*).

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protectione, sì etiam per lo amore et benivolentia che sempre havemo portato et portamo ad epsi Pisani : et per il desiderio che tenevemo de la pace et quiete de quella citade, et de le altre de Italia. Et se bene epsi Pisani se sono forsi dogliuti de qualche parte de epso nostro laudo : non dubitamo che, considerando bene il tuto, doverano restare ben satisfacti ; et ogni die più cognoscerano, che havemo havuto condigno respecto al facto loro ; et cussì etiam per lo advenire non mancharemo de farli ogni beneficio et favore. Et se havessimo potuto fare più a suo bene et commodo, l'havessimo facto molto voluntieri ; ma lo è anche sta necessario far talmente, che lo effecto de la Pace havesse a seguire. Et siamo in pensiero de mandare un nostro cancellero lì a Pisa a parlare a quelli Mag^{ci} Antiani : perche se'dagi forma a le cose che se hanno a fare, cum riposo et bona contenteza de le parte ; et cussì potereti far intendere questo nostro bono animo a sue Magnificentie. Et bene valete.

Ferrariae, xix Aprilis, 1499.

Thebaldus.

(outside) Illu. filio nostro aman^{mo} D^{no} Ferdinando Estensi, *Pisis subito*.

(R. Archivio di Stato in Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*.)

XIX

Isabella d' Este Gonzaga to Duke Ercole of Ferrara.

MANTUA,

May 14, 1499.

ILL^{mo} SIGNORE, MIO PADRE OBSER^{mo},

Non posso fare, sì per lo amore che porto a li figlioli dil quondam ill. Messer Nicolò da Este, come per il debito et officio mio, non piglij la protectione sua presso Vostra Celsitudine. Perhò mandando loro a quella Philippo Marchese, lator presente, ad farli reverentia, et farli intendere il bisogno suo ; gli supplico se digni haverli raccomandati, et ad prestare grata audientia ad epso Philippo ; perchè omne beneficio, che V^{ra} Ill^{ma} Sig^{ria} conferirà in li prefati figlioli, haverò tanto accepto che se lei venisse

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a contribuirlo in me propria. Et reputarollo a singular gratia da V^{ra} Ex^{tia}, a la quale sempre me raccomando.

Mantue, xiv Maij, 1499.

Ill^{me} D.V.

Filia Isabella Marchionissa Mantue, etc.

(R. Archivio di Stato in Modena, Cancelleria Ducale, *Lettere di Isabella d' Este Gonzaga.*)

XX

Duke Ercole of Ferrara to the Cardinal Ippolito d' Este.

FERRARA,

August 19, 1499.

DUX FERRARIAE, ETC.—Ill^{mo} et Rev^{mo} d^{no} filio nostro aman^{mo} D^{no} Hyppolito Sancte Lutie in Silice Diacono Cardinali Estensi, etc. Salutem.

Havemo inteso per diverse vie, cum la maggiore displicentia del mondo, che la S^{ria} V^{ra} se ha facto fare le arme bianche a fine de armarse et de ingerirse in cose belliche et seve ; che non facilmente haveressimo creduto, per essere alienissimo da la dignità et professione vostra, se da una persona sola il ni fosse stato significato ; ma lo è tanto notorio che non lo volere credere seria grande apocagine et obstinatione. Havemo infin qui dissimulando taciuto cum la S^{ria} V^{ra} molte cose, che grandemente ne offendevano, per non li vedere molto pericolo : imputando et adscrivendo tuta la colpa al aetà, et sperando che, crescendo li anni, dovesse crescere in lei il timore de Dio (da la cui clementia l'ha ricevuti tanti beneficij), la gravità et modestia ecclesiastica : cio è conveniente ali pari vostri. Ma restamo assai decepti de questa nostra opinione : vedendo la S^{ria} V^{ra} fare peggio et più pubblicamente che la non ha facto insin qui. Et perchè hora cognoscemo che la è in evidente pericolo del stato et conditione soa, non ni è parso de tacere più ultra nè di potere più dissimulare. Però considerato che lo armeggiare vostro non po fare alcun bono fructo : ma bene vi po fare irregulare et digno di depositione, et privarvi de la dignità et beneficij : vi exhortamo, stringemo, et se alcuna auctorità paterna ni è restata in la S^{ria}

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V^{ra}, vi commandiamo, che debiati desistere da queste vie armigere, et attendere a vivere da bono archiepiscopo et da rev^{mo} Cardinale; et se forsi vi fosse persuaso che lo armare vostro havesse a dare la victoria alo Ill^{mo} S. Duca de Milano, et a farli beneficio, teneti per certo che tale persuasore non ama Soa Ex^{tia}, et manco la S^{ria} V^{ra}; perchè'l vostro armeggiare offenderia Nostro Signor Dio; et il provocaria ad ira et indignatione, et lo faria contraria a la parte per la quale voi portasti le arme. Ma volendo aiutare il prefato Ex^{mo} S. Duca, come tuti dovemo volere, faccia la S^{ria} V^{ra} l'officio suo: preghi Nostro Signor Dio per la salute et victoria de Soa Ex^{tia} et de li exerciti soi; et faci pregarli et supplicarli per tuti li religiosi et clerici seculari di la soa provintia; intervenga lei a dicte oratione, come è suo debito, senza intermissione. Queste serano bone arme bianche et senza pericolo de irregolarità et cum grande merito. Armandovi faresti peccato mortale, et digno di excommunicatione; et ritrovandovi dove fosse morto qualchuno seresti irregulare; perchè non è licito a simplici chierici de venire a tale acto, senon per la defensione necessaria di la soa persona quando fosseno assaltati da altri, et non potessero altramente campare nè fugire; molto manco è licito ad uno cardinale et archiepiscopo. Et doveti considerare che ogni piccolo disfavore che havesti a Roma in questi casi, come facilmente poteria accadere, faria il peccato vostro molto maggiore, ultra la infamia et macula indelebile che ni contraheresti, et il pericolo de la vita vostra o de mutilatione de qualche membro. Temeti adonca Nostro Signor Idio; et recognosceti li soi beneficij; et ricordativi, che se non servati li mandati soi, et se non li sereti grato, vi farà cum la spada de la iustitia recognoscere lo errore vostro. Et se li parerà che lo eccesso vostro non meriti misericordia, come non meritaria questo, per essere pur tropo fuori de la fede et Religione Christiana, vi farà peggio. Examinati bene la conscientia vostra; et se le exhortatione nostre, le quale sole doveriano bastare per essere vostro debito di farni cosa grata, non vi moveno, fatti che'l timore de Dio, del danno grande, del pericolo, et de la infamia, ve drizi a la bona via; alo Ill^{mo} S. Duca non manchati de assistere, de aiutare Soa Ex^{tia} in le fatiche, in li examini, de favorire le

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cose sue tanto quanto se extende la auctorità et potestà vostra ; perchè la S^{ria} V^{ra} ni è debitrice per li grandissimi beneficij da Soa Ex^{tia} ricevuti, ultra la strectissima coniunctione, lassando l'arme ali seculari. Cussì facendo satisfareti in quella parte che potereti al debito vostro verso Soa Celsitudine, et non offendereti Nostro Signor Idio ; a Nui fareti cosa gratissima et da ogni uno sereti commendato. Et bene valeat R^{ma} Do. V^{ra}.

Ferrariae, xix Augusti, 1499.

Thebaldus.

(R. Archivio di Stato in Modena, *Carteggio dei Principi*.)

XXI

Duke Ercole of Ferrara to Beltrando Costabili.

COMACCHIO,

October 5, 1500.

REVERENDE DILECTISSIME NOSTER,—

Il S. Messer Zoanne Bentivoglio per uno suo cancellero ni ha communicato havere adviso de bon loco, come il duca Valentino, il quale se prepara per venire a li danni de li Signori de Pesaro, Arimino, et Faenza, vole etiamdio venire a li danni de sua S^{ria} per insignorirse de Bologna, come de le predictae citade : cosa che non credemo gli sia per reuscire, essendo sta renovata la protectione de la Maestà Christianissima questa estate proxima passata al prefato S. M^r Zoanne et a' Bolognesi. Tutavia sua S^{ria} per havere tuta la sua speranza in la prefata Maestà et in li Sig^{ri} Locotenenti Regii, et per ricordo nostro, farà ricorso a sue M^{ta} et Sig^{rie} per essere conservato et defeso in casa sua, come è molto ben conveniente. Cognoscemo questa impresa essere di grandissimo danno ala prefata Maestà non solamente per Bologna, ma etiamdio per Faenza, Arimino, et Pesaro ; perchè quando il duca Valentino on la Chiezia avesse dicte terre insieme cum Forlì, Cesena et Imola, non poteria mancho in Italia che il stato de Milano, et però li Ill^{mi} S^{ri} Duchi de Milano non hanno mai voluto tollerare che la Chiezia desfaci tuti li Signori de dicte terre, nè che le siano date ad uno ; anci hanno facto ogni opera per conservare cadiuno de dicti Signori in stato ; et per valersene

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meglio, gli hanno anchora dato soldo. Cussi in tute le imprese che hanno facto in Italia, se sono assai serviti de li Signori et terre de Romagna per essere loco opportuno et molto a proposito in tuti li movimenti che se fanno in Italia ; come se vide per experientia in la guerra mosta contra Fiorentini al tempo del M^{co} Bartholomeo da Bergamo,¹ et poi al tempo del Serenissimo Re Carlo, et ultimamente quando Venetiani volsero mandare soccorso a Pisa per la valle de Lamone. Siche non solamente la Chr^{ma} M^{ta} non debe tollerare che Bologna devengi in mane del duca Valentino, ma pur non debe permettere che lo acquisti in Romagna più de quello che'l ge ha : oltrache è anche mal facto che quelli naturali Signori siano desfatti et catiati de casa sua, senza alcuna iusta causa. Pregati adunque quelli Rev^{do} et ill. S^{ri} Locotenenti per parte nostra, che non vogliano sopportare che'l prefato S. Messer Zoanne sia molestato, cussi per la fede data a sua S^{ria} in lo novo protectione, et per honore del Christianissimo Re, come anche per utile et beneficio de sua Maestà la quale al presente et per lo advenire, stando Bologna in quelli termini che la è, haverà sempre tuta quella citade al suo comando, come la ha il suo ducato de Milano, et non meno se ne valerà in tute le imprese che la farà ; che non seria quando la fusse in mane del Papa o del duca Valentino ; ricordandoli etiamdio che per lo interesse de la prefata Maestà debono fare ogni cosa ad epsi possibile perchè li Signori de Faenza, Arimino, et Pesaro restino in casa, et cum questa via farli servitori et schiavi de la Chr^{ma} M^{ta} ; non omettendo de farli tohare cum mano anchora lo interesse et preiuditio nostro, il quale seria grandissimo quando il duca Valentino havesse più in Romagna de quello che l'ha, et maximamente in Bologna, sapendo sue Sig^{rie} molto bene quello che lo anno passato tentava contra de Nui. Svegliati per modo sue Sig^{rie} che le gustino de quanta importantia sia questa cosa per più capi, et non lassati cosa a ricordare che sia per inanimare et accendere sue Sig^{rie} a fare la provisione necessaria. Et certamente ni pare che la prefata M^{ta} et S^{rie} habiano una grande et vera iustificatione ad impedire dicta impresa, cum fare intendere al Papa non essere tempo al

¹ i.e. The Colleonic War in 1469,

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presente de attendere a guerre in Italia, essendo le cose del Turco inanti come sono. Et a sue Sig^{rie} ne raccomandareti, pregandole che le tengano questo nostro ricordo secreto.

La alligata sopra questa materia a Messer Zoanne Valla, voressemo che fusse mandata a salvamento et per modo che la continentia non devenisse a notitia de altri. Però pregareti quelli Signori che la vogliano mandare salvamente, facendoli intendere per che causa la sia, et vui ali cavallari regii etiam la raccomandareti.

Comachi, v Octobris, 1500.

Post^a.—Se'l vi paresse che dicte lettere non havessero ad andare a salvamento per dicta via, seria da vedere se gli fusse qualche cancellero del prefato S. Messer Zoanne il quale havesse modo di mandarle. Et in effecto governati questa cosa come meglio vi parerà, aciò che le lettere non vadino in sinistro, et che la continentia sia secreta cussì a Milano come in Franza.¹

(R. Archivio di Stato in Modena, *Minutario Cronologico*.)

XXII

Isabella d' Este Gonzaga to Duke Ercole of Ferrara.

MANTUA,

November 27, 1500.

ILL^{MO} ET EX^{MO} SIGNORE, MIO PADRE OBSER^{MO},

De bocha del Signore mio consorte et per la lettera de V^{ra} Ex^{tia} ho inteso quanto amorevolmente la me ha invitata ad venire a tuore el Jubileo; dil che gli resto molto obligata et ringratiola grandemente. Ma havendo ben considerato sopra la spesa che me accaderia a fare se volesse andare a Roma,

¹ The *alligata* to Giovanni Valla is in nearly the same terms. He is to appeal to the King and Monsignor de Rouen to protect Bentivoglio, with the same arguments about the importance of Bologna to the Duchy of Milan: "non pretermettendo anche de tohare lo interesse et preiuditio nostro, il quale non poteria essere maggiore, come sue M^{ta} et S^{ria} facilmente iudicarano, reducendosse a memoria quello che se tentava contra di Nui hora fa uno anno per mezo del Car^{le} Borgia legato del Papa: oltrache havendo o il Papa o il duca Valentino Bologna cum le altre citade de Romagna, non seria meno potente in Italia che il stato de Milano, et congiunto cum

APPENDIX II

trovo che in consciencia non spenderia manco de mille aut octocento ducati a limitarla più che potesse, in modo che dovendo pagare el quarto, o venire a composicione, non se faria cum manco de docento ducati; et ritrovandomi in tutto exausta de dinari per le grave spese che me sono occorse questi anni, et molto indebitata, non saperia como ritrovarli. Però la Ex^{tia} V^{ra} et Nostro Signor Dio me haverà per excusata, havendo respecto alla necessità et bona disposizione mia; sperando che per essere graciosà de indulgentia la S^{ta} de Nostro Signore la mi confermarà alla quaresima, passato che serrà el Jubileo, el mio confessionale, per auctorità del quale poterò farmi absolvere de colpa et de pena, per il che venirò cum minore spesa ad conseguire el merito. Se io fussi venuta haverei facto ogni cosa per condurre la venerabile Sore Osana; cum la quale havendone parlato dice che, per visitare la venerabile Sore Lucia et fare cosa grata a V^{ra} Ex^{tia} et a me, faria ogni extremità: benchè mal volunteri, per havere già parecchi anni facto deliberatione et meso voto de non uscire de Mantua, parendoli, usando le sue proprie parole, che la sii cossì trista persona che la non deba andare in torno. Non di meno quando io fussi venuta, cum la obedientia che la Ex^{tia} V^{ra} mi ha mandata, l'haveria disposta et conducta.

Mandarò ad essa la lectica che la mi ha recircata, et in bona gratia di quella me raccomandando sempre.

Mantue, xxvii Novembris, M D.

Ex. V.

Filia Isabella Marchionissa Mantue, etc.

(R. Archivio di Stato in Modena, Cancelleria Ducale, *Lettere di Isabella d' Este Gonzaga.*)

altri seria anche maggiore." He says nothing here about protecting the other Signori, but alludes to the Turk, and bids Valla pray the King and Cardinal not to communicate this *ricordo* to others (*Minutario Cronologico*). Similarly in an instruction to Bartolommeo de' Cavallieri, October 30, 1500, the latter is to go to the French King wherever he may be and lay before him the Duke's opinion, according to the letters of the 5th, and urge him to protect Bologna from the Borgia (*Carteggio degli Ambasciatori — Francia*).

APPENDIX II

XXIII

Pope Julius II to the Cardinal Ippolito d' Este.

ROME,

May 8, 1507.

DILECTE FILI NOSTER salutem et apostolicam benedictionem. Littere dilecti filii nostri Antonii tituli Sancti Vitalis presbiteri Cardinalis, Bononie etc. Nostri et Apostolice Sedis Legati, magnam Circumspectioni tue laudem tribuunt. Testantur enim victoriam contra Tirannos Bentivolos nuper partam in tua singulari virtute, qui etiam armatus illis obstiteris, constituisse; cum pro statu Nostro et Sancte Romane Ecclesie, cuius honorabile membrum et peculiaris filius es, nec discrimen nec laborem illum subterfugiendum putaveris; arcem etiam Sphilinberti magno ingenio hostibus Nostris subtraxeris. Que, et si Nobis inopinata non erant, tamen gratissima iucundissimaeque fuerunt. Commendamus igitur ipsam tuam Circumspectionem in Domino, Nosque tam preclari facinoris memores gratosque pollicemur. Arcem autem Sphilinberti una cum illius oppido ut retineas te exhortamur; et, si fieri potest, idem contra Alexandrum Pium de Soxolo, qui hostibus Nostris favit et se Sancte Romane Ecclesie hostem declaravit, efficias ut uberius a Nobis valeas commendari. *Datum Rome apud Sanctum Petrum sub annulo Piscatoris, Die viii Maj, MCCCCVII, Pontificatus Nostri anno quarto.*

(Original Brief in the R. Archivio di Stato in Modena.)

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